


THE * NOVELS * OF
ALEXANDRE * DUMAS

THE
BLACK TULIP





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

W. Burn

THE BLACK TULIP

THE NOVELS OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Messrs. Methuen are publishing a new edition in more convenient form of their famous translations of these great novels. The first volumes are:—

ACTÉ

CÉCILE

THE PRINCE OF THIEVES

THE CORSICAN BROTHERS AND
OTHO THE ARCHER

THE CASTLE OF EPPSTEIN

ROBIN HOOD THE OUTLAW

THE BLACK TULIP

THE TAKING OF CALAIS

THE BLACK TULIP

BY
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

NEWLY TRANSLATED BY
ALFRED ALLINSON

METHUEN & CO. LTD.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

First Published in this Form in 1920

This Translation was First Published in February 1904

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I A GRATEFUL PEOPLE	11
II THE TWO BROTHERS	21
III JOHN DE WITT'S PUPIL.	30
IV A BLOODY DEED	41
V THE TULIP-FANCIER AND HIS NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOUR	52
VI PROFESSIONAL HATRED	61
VII THE HAPPY MAN MAKES ACQUAINTANCE WITH CALAMITY	69
VIII A THIEF IN THE NIGHT.	80
IX THE FAMILY CELL	87
X THE GAOLER'S DAUGHTER	92
XI VAN BAERLE'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT	97
XII ON THE SCAFFOLD.	109
XIII A DISAPPOINTED SPECTATOR	113
XIV THE DORDRECHT PIGEONS	118
XV THE GRATED DOOR	123
XVI MASTER AND SCHOLAR	130
XVII THE FIRST OF THE THREE SEEDLINGS	137
XVIII ROSA'S LOVER	146
XIX RIVAL CLAIMANTS TO VAN BAERLE'S HEART	153

CHAP.		PAGE
XX	A WEEK OF WAITING	15
XXI	THE SECOND BULB	16
XXII	THE BLACK TULIP FLOWERS	17
XXIII	MACHINATIONS	18
XXIV	THE BLACK TULIP CHANGES MASTERS	19
XXV	PRESIDENT VAN SYSTEMS	19
XXVI	A DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE HORTI- CULTURAL SOCIETY OF HAARLEM	20
XXVII	THE THIRD BULB	21
XXVIII	THE SONG OF THE FLOWERS	21
XXIX	VAN BAERLE, BEFORE LEAVING LOEWE- STEIN, SETTLES UP ACCOUNTS WITH GRYPHUS	22
XXX	IN WHICH WE GET AN INKLING OF THE FATE IN STORE FOR CORNELIUS VAN BAERLE	23
XXXI	AT HAARLEM	23
XXXII	A LAST BOON	24
	CONCLUSION	25

INTRODUCTION

ON the 9th of May, 1849, Dumas left Paris for Amsterdam to be present at the Coronation of William III. of Holland. The composer Flotow was accustomed to relate that the King, after remarking to our author on the fact that none of his romances were taken from Dutch history, told him the story of "The Black Tulip," which Dumas thereupon undertook to write. Whether or no this anecdote is true, it is certain that the book appeared in 1850 (Paris : Baudry), whilst Dumas' impressions of his visit to the Netherlands were still fresh.

Now, legends respecting the origin of many of the novels abound. Some hesitation in accepting Flotow's anecdote as authentic is permissible when it is considered that if it were so Dumas would scarcely have refrained from narrating his interview with the King by way of introduction. Moreover, Flotow's story is entirely inconsistent with the generally received statement that it was to Paul Lacroix—otherwise known as the Bibliophile Jacob—that Dumas owed the idea. The Bibliophile was certainly assisting him with the novels towards 1850 ; his speciality was literary and historical research, which he pursued with curious minuteness, and nothing seems more likely than that his studies led him across an incident analogous to the misfortunes of Cornelius van Baerle.

Whether it was the King of Holland or Paul Lacroix who had the honour of planting the germ of the story in Dumas' busy brain is really unimportant. Of more

interest is it that the passionate intensity of purpose which must have burned in him whilst describing the devotion of his hero for his bulbs seems to have left no permanent impression upon the author's mind. In his latter days he found time occasionally to chat with the readers of his journals about his favourites among his own books. Some, by no means the best known to-day are frequently referred to in affectionate terms ; others which are usually regarded as among his best, come in for attention, but "The Black Tulip" seems to have been left unnoticed. It is frequently the case that the work which is acclaimed by the public, and of which edition follows edition, is not the favourite child of its author. This story for over fifty years has enjoyed a success which, if considered as somewhat excessive when its merits are compared with certain other of Dumas' minor novels which enjoy far less vogue, is comprehensible on this side of the Channel, at least, when Thackeray's encomium upon its modesty is recollected. Its merit seems to us to lie not so much in the skilfully devised plot and dexterously manipulated characters as in the actuality of all that concerns the black tulip. Dumas contrives precisely, in what manner may be a mystery to the reader, to invest the bulb with all the interest that a human being could inspire. Had he failed in doing this, the fate of the persons who depend upon it would have been a matter of comparative indifference to the reader, and the tale would entirely fail to take the very respectable place which it holds to-day in the *Œuvres Complètes*.

To slow and patient toilers in the art of fiction Dumas' methods of work appear almost incredible. To revolve the idea of a story for a day or two, then to promise the almost immediate delivery of the first chapters to an editor of a newspaper, and from the day of the publication of the first instalment until the reaching of the *dénouement* to be dunned persistently by the printer's devil for "copy"—such was the manner of the production of "The Black Tulip" and of most of Dumas'

books. Excitement, pressure, dire necessity—these operated on Dumas as the natural forces which cause a fountain to shoot forth and dance and sparkle in the air.

The celebrated Alphonse Karr, a devoted lover of flowers, took the trouble to make a “romancers’ garden” composed of trees and flowers which contemporary novelists, finding the laws of nature too narrow for them, had described in their books. This imaginary garden owed to George Sand a blue chrysanthemum, to Victor Hugo a Bengal rose without thorns, to Balzac a climbing azalea, to Jules Janin a blue pink, to Madame de Genlis a green rose, to Eugène Sue a variety of cactus growing in Paris in the open air, to Paul Féval a variety of larch which retained its leaves during winter, to Forgues a pretty little pink clematis which flourished round the windows in the Latin quarter, to Rolle a scented camellia, and to Dumas the black tulip and a white lotus. The white lotus will duly make its appearance in another volume of this series. The black tulip, it may be remarked, though unknown in Dumas’ day, has now become an accomplished fact.

Dumas, a poet and not a botanist, had charming if not very precise notions about flowers. To him doubtless they said :

“ Nous sommes les filles du feu secret,
Du feu qui circule dans les veines de la terre ;
Nous sommes les filles de l’aurore et de la rosée,
Nous sommes les filles de l’air,
Nous sommes les filles de l’eau ;
Mais nous sommes avant tout les filles du ciel.”

R. S. G.



THE BLACK TULIP

CHAPTER I

A GRATEFUL PEOPLE

IT is the 20th of August, 1672. The city of The Hague,—so bright and white and pretty you might suppose every day a Sunday,—The Hague, with its shady park, its tall trees bending over its Gothic houses, its canals reflecting on their broad mirror-like surfaces the Oriental-looking cupolas of its church spires,—The Hague, capital of the Seven United Provinces,—is congested in every artery with a black and red tide of thronging humanity. Its citizens, breathless and excited, knife at belt, musket on shoulder, or stick in hand, are hurrying with one accord towards the Buytenhof.

In that redoubtable prison, the grated windows of which are pointed out to the traveller to this day, had lain and languished, ever since the charge of attempted murder brought against him by the surgeon Tyckelaer, Cornelius de Witt, brother of the ex-Grand Pensionary of Holland.

Were not the history of the whole period, and particularly of the year in the middle of which our tale begins, bound up inextricably with the two names just mentioned, the few lines of explanation that follow might seem a digression. But we must once for all warn the reader, —our old friend to whom we always promise amusement on our first page, and with whom in those that

follow we endeavour to keep our word to the best of our ability,—that this much explanation is no less indispensable for the right understanding of our story than for the appreciation of the great political events amid which its scene is laid.

Cornelius de Witt, Intendant of Dykes in that land of dykes, ex-Burgomaster of Dordrecht, his native town, and Deputy to the States General of Holland, was forty-nine years of age when the Dutch people, wearied of the Republic as administered by John de Witt, Grand Pensionary of Holland, was seized with a violent craving for the re-establishment of the Stadtholderate, which the Perpetual Edict imposed by John de Witt on the United Provinces had for ever abolished in Holland.

The public mind, changeable and capricious as it is, seldom fails to discern a man behind a principle. So behind the Republic the people beheld the two stern faces of the brothers De Witt,—those old Romans of Holland, too proud to truckle to the national desire, unfaltering champions of liberty without licence, and well-being without extravagance. Behind the Stadtholderate, on the other hand, they discerned the bowed head and the grave, reflective brow of young William of Orange.

The two De Witts had always been anxious to keep on terms with Louis XIV., whose moral ascendancy over Europe they fully realised, while the material mastery of Holland possessed by the same monarch had been practically brought home to them by the late victorious and astounding campaign of the Rhine, illustrated by that paladin of romance, known as the Comte de Guiche, and sung by Boileau in immortal verse,—a campaign which, in three short months, had utterly broken the power of the United Provinces.

Louis XIV. had long been the enemy of the Dutch, who, through the instrumentality of the French refugees in Holland, insulted or mocked him on every possible occasion. National pride constituted him the Mithridates of the Republic. Hence arose a twofold animus against the De Witts, resulting at once from strenuous

opposition to a rule in conflict with the wishes of the nation, and from that intolerance natural to all conquered races, who are sanguine that another leader may yet save them from impending disaster and humiliation.

This other leader, ready to stand forth, ready to measure himself against Louis XIV., however portentous the future reserved for him might be—this other leader was William, Prince of Orange, son of William II. and grandson through Henrietta Stuart of Charles I. of England. His was the presence that had become visible behind the Stadtholderate.

The young man was twenty-two in 1672. John de Witt had been his tutor, and had educated him with the design of making of this hereditary Prince a dutiful citizen. His patriotism exceeding his regard for his pupil, he had deprived him by the Perpetual Edict of all hope of the Stadtholderate. But Providence had laughed at the pretensions of men who would make and unmake earthly sovereignties without consulting the paramount Will of Heaven. Partly through Dutch obstinacy, partly by the terror inspired by Louis XIV., the policy of the Grand Pensionary was set aside, and the Perpetual Edict annulled by the re-establishment of the Stadtholderate of William of Orange, for whom Providence reserved a career still hidden in the mysterious depths of the future.

The Grand Pensionary yielded to the resolution of his fellow-citizens ; but Cornelius de Witt was less amenable, and, in spite of the Orangist mob that besieged his house in Dordrecht and threatened to kill him, long refused to sign the act re-establishing the Stadtholderate.

His sobbing wife's entreaties in the end prevailed. He signed the act, but added to his name the two letters V.C. (*Vi Coactus*) :—*under compulsion*. That he escaped with his life from the violence of his enemies was nothing less than a miracle.

John de Witt's compliance, quicker and more elastic to the wishes of his fellow-citizens, was scarcely more serviceable to him. Within a few days he was the

victim of a would-be assassin. Though stabbed in several places, he did not die of his wounds.

Thus the Orangists found themselves thwarted. The life of the two brothers was an ever-present obstacle to their schemes; they changed their tactics for a while, prepared at any given moment to resort either to violence or fraud, and endeavoured to compass by the weapon of calumny what they had been unable to accomplish with the dagger.

How seldom, at some critical hour, is a man to be found who will, and can, lead on to victory the cause of God! But when such a will and capacity are perchance happily united, History proudly records that leader's name, and extols it to races yet unborn.

Yet should the spirit of evil interfere in human concerns for the destruction of an individual or an Empire, instantly some despicable agent to whom a whisper suffices offers his services. In the present instance that tool of the devil was a surgeon called Tyckelaer.

He solemnly declared that Cornelius de Witt, exasperated, as he proved himself to be by his postscript, at the repeal of the Perpetual Edict and fired with hatred against William of Orange, had procured an assassin to save the Republic from the newly-elected Stadtholder. Further, that the assassin was he, Tyckelaer, himself, who, goaded by remorse at the bare idea of the deed required of him, preferred to risk an open avowal to the perpetration of such a crime.

The explosion in the Orangist camp at the disclosure of this plot is easier to imagine than to describe. Cornelius, Intendant of Dykes, brother of John de Witt, was arrested in his house at the instigation of the Attorney-General on the 16th of August, 1672, and in a cell of the Buytenhof underwent the *first question*, reserved for the most abandoned criminals, to extort from him a confession of the alleged plot against William of Orange.

A man of supreme intelligence, Cornelius, moreover, was the possessor of a rare moral courage. Of the race of those martyrs who, possessed by political zeal, no

less fervently than their ancestors had been with religious, smile at torture, Cornelius on the rack recited, with a firm voice and with due regard to the metre, the first strophe of Horace's *Justum ac tenacem*, confessed nothing, and wore out not only the strength, but the very fanaticism of his torturers.

None the less, the Judges acquitted Tyckelaer and pronounced sentence against Cornelius, whom they degraded from his offices and honours, compelled to pay the cost of the trial, and condemned to exile.

This downfall in some measure gratified the people, to whose welfare Cornelius had ceaselessly devoted himself, for the sentence not only condemned an innocent man, but brought low one who had held an exalted position. Notwithstanding, as we shall see later on, they had not had their fill.

In the vice of ingratitude the Dutch may be said to surpass the Athenians, who have left behind them no inconsiderable reputation for forgetfulness of benefits received. But the Athenians were content with banishing Aristides.

At the first rumour of arraigning his brother for trial, John de Witt had sent in his resignation of the office of Grand Pensionary. He was no less worthily recompensed for his single-hearted service to his country. Disillusionment and the wounds bestowed by his would-be assassins were all he bore away with him into private life—a fortune such as is not infrequently reserved for men of honour who are guilty of neglecting self-aggrandisement in the interests of their native land.

In the meantime, William of Orange, hastening the procession of events by every means in his power, waited till the people whose idol he was had made of the dead bodies of the two brothers the stepping-stones he needed, if he were indeed to attain to the Stadtholderate.

Thus it came about that on the 20th of August, 1672, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, the whole city was hurrying to the Buytenhof to gaze at the spectacle of Cornelius de Witt's departure from prison on his way

into exile, and to note what marks the rack had left on the gallant form of the man who knew his Horace so well. It must be admitted, moreover, that all this vast assemblage of the populace at the Buytenhof was not gathered together with the sole intention of witnessing a show, but that many amongst the crowd aspired to play a part, or rather to act as substitute in one which they thought had been inadequately filled—that of the executioner.

It is true there were others who hurried along with less murderous intentions. Their only concern was to lose nothing of the sight so dear to the common herd, whose innate vanity it flatters—that of human greatness dragged in the dust.

“Our intrepid De Witt!” said one: “so even he has been imprisoned and torn by the rack! Shall we not see him pale, bleeding, disgraced?”

A fine triumph truly for the citizen and shopkeeper, who is even more malignantly envious than the lowest classes! What smug burgher of The Hague but would fain participate in it?

“Then, too,” suggested the Orangist agitators, cunningly interspersed amongst the rabble they hoped to manipulate like an instrument equally well adapted for cutting and bruising,—“surely, between the Buytenhof and the city gate, luck will give us a chance to throw just one handful of mud or possibly even a few stones at this Dyke Intendant, this Cornelius who, beside grudging the Stadtholderate with his ‘*under compulsion*,’ forsooth, to the Prince of Orange, would have had him done to death by an assassin.”

“Not to speak of the fact,” urged the rancorous enemies of France, “that if there was a man of any sense and spirit in the Hague, Cornelius de Witt would never be allowed to escape into exile. Once he is free, he will start intriguing again with France, and will live with that unprincipled rascal, his brother John, on the Marquis de Louvois’ gold.”

It will be readily understood such a vehement mood

rather favours running than mere walking, which explains why the inhabitants of The Hague hurried in such headlong haste in the direction of the Buytenhof.

Foremost among those who were in advance of the others, with a heart full of fury and a head devoid of any definite purpose, ran the redoubtable Tyckelaer, acclaimed by the Orangists as an incorruptible, patriotic and Christian hero.

This arch scoundrel was giving a graphic account—which he adorned with all the flowery ornamentation his wit and perfervid imagination could devise—of the efforts made by Cornelius de Witt to undermine his integrity, of the sums of gold that were to reward him, and of all the premeditated hellish contrivances to make easy his path to murder.

The close of each period of his eloquence, which was greedily drunk in by the populace, gave occasion for shouts of appreciative enthusiasm for Prince William, and yells of unreasoning fury against the brothers De Witt.

The rabble now started execrating the wicked Judges whose sentence let such an atrocious criminal as this wretched Cornelius escape safe and sound.

Then malignant whisperings were heard :

“ He is going ! he will escape us ! ”

Others took up the chorus :

“ A boat lies ready for him at Scheveningen, a French vessel. Tyckelaer has seen it.”

“ Noble Tyckelaer ! brave Tyckelaer ! ” cried the chorus.

“ And John, to boot ! who is every whit as abominable a traitor as his brother,” said a voice, “ John will escape too.”

“ Ay, and once they are in France, the two knaves will squander our money, the money for the ships, arsenals, and dockyards they have sold to Louis XIV.”

“ Let us stop them, stop them ! ” screamed a patriot well in front of the others.

“ To the prison ! to the prison ! ” yelled the chorus.

And at these yells the burglars began to redouble their speed, muskets were cocked, hatchets gleamed, and eyes blazed.

No recourse as yet, however, had been had to violence, and the line of Cavalry on guard in the vicinity of the Buytenhof seemingly frozen, motionless, silent, were more terrifying in their impassiveness than all the wild crowd with its roars and frenzy and curses. The men on their horses sat still as statues under the command of their head, Count Tilly, Captain of the Cavalry of The Hague, who held his sword bare, but reversed, with its point at the angle of his stirrup.

The presence of this troop, the single defenders of the prison, held in check not only the seething, clamorous mob, but also the detachment of the Burgher-Guard, who, placed opposite the Buytenhof to support the Cavalry in maintaining order, encouraged the rioters with disloyal shouts :

“ Long live Orange ! Down with traitors ! ”

It is true the presence of Tilly and his Cavalry acted as a desirable curb on the Burgher soldiers, but these gradually frenzied themselves by their own cries, and not understanding how courage may exist without clamour, and attributing the troop's silence to cowardice, they made a step towards the prison, drawing after them close at their heels the rabid populace.

Straightway Count Tilly advanced alone towards them, and simply raising his sword, and frowning sternly :

“ Well ! gentlemen of the Burgher-Guard,” he asked, “ why are you here, and what do you want ? ”

The Burghers brandished their muskets, reiterating their cry :

“ Long live Orange ! Death to traitors ! ”

“ ‘ Long live Orange ’ indeed ! ” echoed Monsieur de Tilly ; “ but give me genial faces rather than lugubrious ones. ‘ Death to traitors ! ’ if you like, as long as you limit yourselves to shouting. Shout as much as you please, ‘ Death to traitors ! ’ But so far from actually putting them to death, that is just what I am here to

prevent—and prevent it I will.” Then, turning towards his men, he cried :

“ Ready arms ! ”

His men obeyed their commanding Officer’s order with a calm precision that made the Burghers and populace retire promptly, not without disorder sufficient to provoke a smile from the Cavalry Captain.

“ Capital ! But, steady there ; steady, Burghers,” he said, with that air of jeering superiority only soldiers possess in perfection ; “ my fellows shall not touch a trigger ; but neither must you come one step nearer the prison.”

To which the Officer of the Burgher-Guard retorted savagely :

“ Don’t you forget, Sir, we have muskets in our hands.”

“ Egod ! I can hardly fail to know that, you have dazzled my eyes enough with the glittering of them,” said Tilly, blandly ; “ but do you also note that we have pistols, and a pistol, as you are aware, easily carries fifty yards, while you are but twenty-five from us.”

“ Death to traitors ! ” vociferated the chafing Burghers.

“ Zounds ! why always the same old tune ? ’tis downright wearisome,” grumbled the Captain.

He resumed his position at the head of his troopers, and the uproar swelled louder and louder round the Buytenhof.

And yet at the very moment when the infuriated populace was scenting the blood of one of its victims, it did not know that the other, as if courting his fate, was passing at a distance of but a hundred paces behind the throng and the soldiers on his way to the Buytenhof.

None other than John de Witt himself had just alighted from his coach with a servant and quietly crossed on foot the outer courtyard in front of the prison. He gave his name to the gaoler, who, however, knew him well by sight, and said :

“ Good morning, Gryphus ! I have come for my brother, Cornelius de Witt. As, of course, you know,

he is exiled, and I wish to accompany him out of the town."

The gaoler, who was more like a tame bear trained to open and shut the prison gate than anything else, greeted him and admitted him into the building, the doors of which were at once locked behind him.

Ten yards further on he met a pretty girl of seventeen or eighteen dressed in the costume of the Friesland peasant-women. She dropped the old man a charming curtsy. Chucking the girl under the chin, he said :

" Good morning, my good, pretty Rosa ; how is my brother ? "

" Oh ! Mynheer John," the young girl replied, " 'tis not the cruel things they have done to him, are troubling me ; they are past and done with."

" Then, what is it distresses you, my pretty one ? "

" I dread the cruel things they mean to do."

" Yes, yes ; you mean the populace ? "

" Do you hear them howling ? "

" They are wildly excited, doubtless, but as we have never done the people anything but good, they will probably quiet down when they see us."

" Unfortunately, that you have never done anything but good is no reason," the girl murmured as she withdrew at a peremptory sign from her father.

" No, child, no ; what you say is only too true. There, he said to himself, as he went on his way, " is a girl who most likely doesn't know how to read and so has never read anything, yet in a single word she has given a summary of the history of the world."

Still calm as ever, but with a more sorrowful air than he had on entering the prison, the ex-Grand-Pensionary continued his way towards his brother's cell.

CHAPTER II

THE TWO BROTHERS

WHILE John de Witt was ascending the stone staircase leading to his brother Cornelius's cell, and as Rosa's presentiments had caused her to fear, the Burgher-Guard made a supreme effort to rid themselves of the check imposed by Tilly's troopers.

On perceiving this, the people, in complete accord with the schemes of their militia, cried with the utmost strength of their lungs : " Hurrah for the Burghers ! "

Astute as he was firm, Monsieur de Tilly conferred with the Burgher-Guard under the protection of his squadron's cocked pistols, and explained that the order given him by the States instructed him to guard with three Companies the prison and its immediate precincts.

" But why such an order ? Why guard the prison ? " interrupted the Orangists.

" Ah ! now you ask me more than I am in a position to tell you. The order was '*Guard* ; ' and I guard. You who, in a way, are in the service, gentlemen, ought to know that an order is never so much as questioned."

" But they have given you this order to enable the traitors to leave the town."

" That's quite possible, as the traitors have been condemned to banishment," said Tilly.

" But who gave this order ? "

" Why, who but the States ? "

" Then, the States are betraying us."

" Well, well, that's none of my business."

" And you are betraying us yourself."

“I ?”

“Yes, you.”

“Come now, come, let us understand one another, gentlemen of the Burgher-Guard. Whom could I betray ? The States : ? How *can* I be betraying them, when, being in their pay, I faithfully carry out their orders ?”

Thereupon, as there was no loophole for contradicting the reasonableness of the Count's reply, menacing roars redoubled. This raging storm of threats the Count met with unruffled politeness.

“For Heaven's sake, gentlemen of the Burgher-Guard, uncock your muskets ; an accident might let one off, and if the shot wounded one of my troopers, two hundred of your men would be dead that moment. Of course, we should be very sorry, but you would be even more so, and such a result is not what either you or I contemplated.”

“Try it,” cried the Burghers, “and you would see we should fire at you.”

“I haven't a doubt you would ; but even if you fired at us till you left not one of us alive, those we should have killed would still be as dead as dead can be.”

“Yield us up your position, then, and you will prove yourself an excellent citizen.”

“First and foremost, I am not a citizen at all,” said Tilly ; “I am an officer. Secondly, I am not a Dutchman, but a Frenchman, a different person altogether. I serve no one and nothing but the States who pay me ; bring me a mandate from the States ordering me to give up my post—that very second I will right about and away. As it is, I am just bored to death !”

“Yes, yes,” roared a hundred voices, instantaneously multiplied by five hundred more. “To the Town Hall ! Go, find the Deputies ! Quick ! to the Town Hall !”

“The very thing,” muttered Tilly, as he watched the angriest portion of the crowd rushing off. “Go and ask a preposterous thing of the Town Hall, and see if you get it. Off with you ! Off with you !”

Fearless officer as he was, he was confident in the honour of the magistrates, as they, on their side, had been confident in his honour as a soldier.

"Captain," whispered his first Lieutenant to the Count, "of course the Deputies won't listen to the insane devils' demands; all the same I shouldn't mind if they would send us a reinforcement."

While this was happening without, John de Witt—whom, after his brief conversation with the gaoler Gryphus and his daughter Rosa, we left ascending the stone staircase—had reached the door of the room where his brother Cornelius was lying on a mattress. He had undergone, as we are aware, the preliminary trial of the rack. The order for his banishment having been issued, there was no need for further and more extreme torture.

Stretched on his bed, the bones of his wrists and fingers broken, for he had utterly refused to confess a crime he was innocent of, lay Cornelius. After three days of acute suffering he had once more begun to breathe freely, on learning that his Judges, from whom he had expected death, had consented to condemn him to banishment.

Of a splendid physique as of an indomitable spirit, Cornelius would have grievously disappointed his enemies had they been able to see in the dark recesses of the cell of the Buytenhof the smile irradiating the martyr's ashen face—the smile of one who in the remembrance of a celestial vision was oblivious of earthly degradation.

By sheer force of will rather than by any external influence the Intendant had regained his vigour, and he was now calculating how much longer legal formalities would detain him in prison.

It was just at this moment that the shouts of the Burgher-militia, mingled with those of the populace, rose in execration of the two brothers and threatened Captain Tilly, their buttress for the time being. The clamour, crashing in full tide at the foot of the prison walls, reached even the prisoner's ears.

But Cornelius, in spite of the appalling roar, neither condescended to inquire as to its origin, nor took the

trouble to raise himself to look out of the narrow, iron-barred window letting in the noise of the tumult.

He was so benumbed with his protracted torture that pain had almost become a part of himself. Moreover, so intense was his exultation in the near severance of soul and body, that he seemed to himself to feel the former, already liberated from all material fetters, hovering above its earthly envelope, like the last flicker of flame over an expiring hearth.

Then he remembered his brother. No doubt, between his thought and the brother's approach there was some connection, explicable perhaps by some of those mysterious laws of magnetism since revealed to us by science.

At the very moment when John was so present to Cornelius's thought that Cornelius was on the verge of uttering his name, the door opened and John entered. He hurried to the prisoner's bedside. The torn arms and hands, wrapped round with linen bandages, were held out towards his famous brother, whom he, Cornelius, had succeeded in surpassing, not indeed in services to his country, but in the hatred of his fellow-countrymen.

John kissed his brother affectionately on the forehead, and laid the wounded hands tenderly on the mattress.

"Cornelius, my poor brother," he said, "you suffer grievously, don't you?"

"I don't suffer, brother, since I see you."

"Poor dear Cornelius! I protest it is I who suffer, then, at seeing you in such a state."

"Indeed, the thought of you has absorbed me, and while they tortured me it never occurred to me to complain but once, when I said, 'Poor brother!' But here you are, let us forget everything else. You have come to take me away, have you not?"

"Yes."

"My wounds are healed. Help me to get up, brother, and you will see how well I can walk."

"You need not walk far, for my carriage is yonder, close to the Vyver, behind Tilly's dragoons."

"Tilly's dragoons! Why are they beside the Vyver?"

"Ah! it seems to be thought," the Grand Pensionary said, with the sad smile that characterised him, "that The Hague populace wish to see you set off, and the authorities fear a disturbance."

"A disturbance?" Cornelius replied, looking fixedly at his embarrassed brother. "A disturbance?"

"Yes, Cornelius."

"Ah! then, that is what I heard just now," the prisoner said, as if talking to himself. "So there is a crowd before the Buytenhof, is there?" he continued, turning to his brother.

"Yes, brother."

"But to come here——"

"Well?"

"How is it you were allowed to pass?"

"We are not overmuch loved, as you are well aware, Cornelius," the Grand Pensionary replied sardonically.

"I came by side streets."

"John! You concealed yourself!"

"I was determined to lose no time in getting to you, and I only did what is done in political life and at sea when the wind is adverse—I tacked."

At this moment a roar, fiercer than any that had preceded it, rose from the Square to the prison. Tilly was carrying on his war of words with the Burgher-Guard.

"Well, well, you are an experienced pilot, John," said Cornelius; "but I doubt if you will pilot your brother from the Buytenhof through the surf and breakers of a people's hatred as successfully as you led Tromp's fleet to Antwerp between the shoals of the Scheldt."

"With God's help, Cornelius, we can but try. But I have something to say to you first."

"Say on."

Again ascended outcry on outcry.

"How these people are beside themselves with rage!" said Cornelius. "Is it against you or against me?"

"I think it includes us both. I told you, brother"

how the Orangists accuse us, amongst their many stupid calumnies, of having negotiated with France."

"Fools !"

"Yes, still they accuse us of it."

"But if these negotiations had been successful, the Dutch would have been spared the defeats of Rees, Orsay, Wesel and Rheinberg, and the passage of the Rhine. And Holland, surrounded with her marshes and her canals, might still believe herself impregnable."

"Indeed that is true, Cornelius ; but what is still more certainly true is that, if any one discovers our correspondence with Monsieur de Louvois, were I the best pilot in all the world, I could not hope to save the fragile skiff that is ready to carry the De Witts and their fortune out of Holland. This correspondence, which will prove to honest men how I love my country, and what sacrifices I had offered to make personally to secure its liberty and its glory—this correspondence will ruin us with the Orangists, our conquerors. So, dear Cornelius, I hope that you burnt it before leaving Dordrecht to join me at The Hague."

"My dear brother, your correspondence with Monsieur de Louvois proves you to have been the greatest, most generous, and most masterly citizen of the Seven United Provinces. I love the glory of my country ; I love your fame still more, and I have taken every care not to burn the correspondence."

"Then, so far as this life is concerned, we are indeed ruined," said the Grand Pensionary calmly, as he approached the window.

"Quite the reverse, John ; at one and the same time we shall secure the safety of our own persons and the renewal of the people's estimation."

"What have you done with those letters, then ?"

"I have entrusted them to Cornelius van Baerle, my god-son, whom you know, and who lives at Dordrecht."

"Oh, poor boy ! Think of that dear simple child ! A profound scholar who, with all his wisdom, thinks only of the flowers that acknowledge their Creator and of

God Who created them ! And this is the being to whose care you have committed this deadly trust ! Oh, brother, this poor dear fellow is ruined ! ”

“ Ruined ? ”

“ Yes, for he will betray himself either by strength or weakness of character. Ignorant though he may be of what is happening to us, however preoccupied at Dordrecht, abstracted as he is beyond belief, one day or other he will know what has befallen us. If he is strong, he will boast of his friendship with us ; if he is weak, he will be terrified on account of it. If he is strong, he will proclaim his secret ; if he is weak, he will let it be stolen from him. In either case, he is ruined, and we too. Quick, quick ! let us escape, brother. if there is still time.”

Cornelius raised himself on his bed, and taking his brother's hand, which quivered at the touch of the linen bandages, he said :

“ Do I not know my god-son ? Have I not read every thought of Van Baerle's brain, every emotion of his heart ? You ask me if he is weak ; you ask me if he is strong. He is neither the one nor the other ; but what does it matter what he is ! The vital point is that he will keep the secret simply because he does not know it himself.”

John started with astonishment.

“ Why so astonished ? ” Cornelius went on, with his gentle smile. “ Cornelius is a diplomatist, educated in the school of John de Witt. I assure you, brother, Van Baerle is unaware of the nature and value of the portfolio I have given into his charge.”

“ Then as quickly as we can, since there is still time, let us send an order to him to burn the packet.”

“ And whom can we send the order by ? ”

“ By my servant, Craeke, who was to have gone with us on horseback, and who came into the prison with me to help you down the staircase.”

“ Thoroughly weigh the matter, John, before you burn these priceless documents.”

"I have decided that above and beyond all else the brothers de Witt must save their lives, if they would save their reputations. Dead, who shall defend us, Cornelius? Who will have even so much as understood us?"

"You believe then that they would kill us if they found these papers?"

Without answering, his brother John stretched his hand towards the walls of the Buytenhof, against which that moment rushed a hurricane of demoniacal yells.

"Yes, yes," said Cornelius, "I hear the din well enough; but what is it all about?"

John opened the window.

"Death to traitors!" howled the mob.

"Do you understand now, Cornelius?"

"Is it we who are traitors!" exclaimed the prisoner, with a significant movement of his shoulders and an appeal with his eyes to the justice of Heaven.

"Yes! it is we," replied John de Witt.

"Where is Craeke?"

"Here, at the door, I expect."

"Bring him in, then."

John opened the door. The faithful servant was indeed waiting on the threshold.

"Come in, Craeke, and listen, as if your life depended on it, to what my brother is going to tell you."

"It is not sufficient to send it by word of mouth, John; unfortunately I must write it."

"Why so?"

"Because Van Baerle will neither give up the packet nor burn it without an unmistakeable order."

"But can you write, dear fellow?" asked John, looking at the crushed hands.

"You would soon see, if I had pen and ink."

"Here is a pencil, at any rate."

"Have you paper?—for they have left me nothing here."

"Here is a Bible. Tear out the front page."

"But who could read your writing?"

"Have patience," protested Cornelius, looking at his brother. "These fingers, which have resisted the executioner's torments, this will which has subdued the pain, shall put forth all their strength together, and the line shall be written out fair and straight."

As good as his word, Cornelius took the pencil and wrote. And drops of blood, which the pressure of the fingers drew from the open wounds, oozed through the white linen. A cold perspiration streamed down the brows of the Grand Pensionary.

Cornelius wrote :

"DEAR GODSON,

"Burn the packet I gave into your care, burn it without looking at it, without even opening it ; so that you yourself may not know its contents. Such secrets as it contains bring death to those entrusted with them. Burn it, and you will have saved both John and Cornelius.

"Farewell, from your loving

"CORNELIUS DE WITT"

John, with tears in his eyes, wiped off a drop of the generous blood which had stained the page, handed it with a last direction to Craeke and turned again to Cornelius, who was blanched with the pain and seemed on the verge of fainting.

"Now," he said, "when brave Craeke sounds his boatswain's whistle, it will tell us he has made his way through the rabble and is safe the other side of the Vyver. Then we will away too."

Scarcely five minutes had gone by, when a long and powerful mariner's whistle pierced the thick arched foliage of the elms and shrilled above the clamour of the Buytenhof. John uplifted his arms in thankfulness to Heaven.

"And now let us be starting, Cornelius !"

CHAPTER III

JOHN DE WITT'S PUPIL

WHILST the menaces of the populace massed at the Buytenhof rose more and more threateningly against the two brothers, compelling John de Witt to hasten Cornelius's departure, a deputation of the Burghers had set off for the Town Hall to demand the retirement of Tilly's Cavalry.

The distance from the Buytenhof to the Hoogstraet is nothing to speak of. A stranger, who from the first had narrowly watched every development of the scene we have depicted, moved away with the others, or rather followed them towards the Town Hall, to gain immediate knowledge of all that passed.

This stranger was a very young man, barely two or three and twenty, of an unimposing personality. Having, no doubt, reasons for not wishing to be recognized, he concealed, so far as he could, his long pale face behind a fine handkerchief of Frisian linen, with which he incessantly wiped his perspiring brow or his burning lips.

With the steadfast eye of a bird of prey, a long aquiline nose, a thin-lipped, straight-cut mouth that was generally open, or rather cloven like the lips of a wound, the man would have offered Lavater—had Lavater lived at the time—a subject for physiognomical study which would not in the first instance have been to that subject's credit. "What difference is to be found," asked the ancients, "between a conqueror's and a pirate's face?" That which may be discerned

between an eagle's and a vulture's. In the one serenity predominates, in the other restlessness and rapacity.

The waxen face, the lank and sickly body, the uneasy carriage of this man who went in the wake of the tumultuous mob from the Buytenhof to the Hoogstraet, were open to question, indeed, as to whether they typified a suspicious ruler of men or an uneasy thief. A police-officer would not have failed to discriminate in favour of the latter on observing the care the stranger took to avoid scrutiny.

He was plainly dressed and to all appearances was unarmed. With thin, nervous wrist and dry, delicately white and aristocratic hand, he leaned not on the arm but on the shoulder of an Officer, who, with his hand on his sword, had up to the moment when his companion had turned away and drawn him along with him, noted with sympathetic interest all that occurred at the Buytenhof.

On arriving at the square of the Hoogstraet, the man with the waxen face urged the other into the shadow of an open shutter, and standing there he concentrated his attention on the Town Hall.

At the raucous shouts of the people a window of the Town Hall was flung open, and a man advanced to harangue the mob.

"Who has come out on the balcony?" the young man asked the Officer, directing his attention by his own fixed stare at the orator. The latter appeared very much agitated and to be supporting himself by the balcony rather than merely leaning over it.

"It is the deputy Bowelt," replied the Officer.

"What sort of man is this deputy Bowelt? Do you know him?"

"An honest man, I believe, your Highness."

On hearing the Officer's estimate of Bowelt's character, the young man involuntarily betrayed such curious disappointment and unmistakeable displeasure that the Officer, observing it, hastened to add:

"According to rumour, at least, your Highness. Of

course I cannot pretend to know anything about it, being quite unacquainted with the man."

"An honest man?" repeated the individual who had been addressed as "your Highness." "Now would you say he is a courageous man too?"

"Ah, your Highness will excuse me, I really cannot decide which about a man whose face, as I said before, is all that I know of him."

"Well, well," muttered the young man, "we have only to wait a little, and we shall soon see."

The Officer bowed his head in token of assent, and was silent.

"If this Bowelt is an honest fellow," continued his Highness, "he is receiving these madmen's demands somewhat oddly."

And the nervous movement of his Highness's hand, which beat in spite of himself on his companion's shoulder—like the fingers of a musician on the keys of a harpsichord—betokened his fiery temperament, but indifferently masked on certain occasions, and at this special moment under an assumption of ill-concealed listlessness and boredom.

The head of the Burgher malcontents was then heard, questioning the deputy for information as to where his colleagues were to be found.

"Gentlemen," Mynheer Bowelt repeated for the second time, "I tell you I am alone with Mynheer van Asperen, and it is quite out of the question for me to settle this matter on my own authority."

"The order! the order!" reiterated furiously several thousand voices.

Mynheer Bowelt made desperate endeavours to explain, but not a word he said could be heard in the din; his arms gesticulating wildly alone proclaimed his utter impotence to control the tumult.

Convinced at last of his powerlessness, he turned towards the open window, and called to Mynheer van Asperen.

No sooner had this gentleman shown himself in his

turn on the balcony than his appearance was greeted with howls only more vehement than those which a few minutes before had compassed Mynheer Bowelt's confusion.

With dauntless intrepidity he attempted to command the attention of the crowd ; but rather than listen to Mynheer van Asperen's speech the populace preferred charging the States Guard, who offered no sort of resistance to the masterful populace.

" See, Colonel," said the young man, frigidly, whilst the mob rushed the principal entrance in the Hoogstraet, " it would appear the debate is to be carried on inside. Let us go and listen to it."

" Oh, your Highness, your Highness, do be careful ! "

" Why so ? "

" Remember there are many amongst these deputies who have had personal dealings with you, and think what would be said if any one of them were to recognise your Highness."

" No doubt I should be accused of having encouraged this riot. You are quite right," said the young man, whose cheeks flushed with mortification at having unguardedly exposed his keen interest. " You are quite right ; we will stop here. From here we shall see them return with or without the order, and then we can decide what I want to know—whether Mynheer Bowelt is an honest man or a courageous man."

" But surely your Highness cannot imagine for a moment," said the Officer, staring with astonishment at him whom he addressed, " that the deputies will order Tilly's horse to retire."

" And pray, why not ? " placidly remarked the young man.

" Because to do so would be tantamount to signing the death-warrant of Cornelius and John de Witt."

" Well, we shall see," his Highness said, in an emotionless voice. " God only knows the workings of men's hearts."

The Officer looked furtively at his companion's expres-

sionless face, and his own paled. He, himself, was both honest and brave.

From the place they had chosen for their watch, his Highness and his equerry heard the clamour and stamping of the rabble on the staircase of the Town Hall. Then the uproar re-echoed across the square, as the sound issued from the open windows of the room on the balcony of which Mynheers Bowelt and van Asperen had appeared, though only to retreat again within ; fearful, no doubt, lest the populace pressing on them should force them over the balustrade.

Then whirling and frenzied shadows were to be seen passing to and fro behind the windows. The council hall was filling.

Suddenly the noise abated ; then suddenly it burst forth again with fresh violence, and reached such a pitch of tumultuous energy that the old edifice shook to its very roof-tree.

Shortly after, the flood of humanity ebbed back again by the galleries and stairs to the entrance, and poured from the archway like a waterspout.

At the head of the first group there flew, rather than ran, a man whose face was vilely contorted with evil joy. It was the surgeon Tyckêlaer.

" We've got it ! We've got it ! " he yelled, brandishing a paper in the air.

" They've got the order ! " exclaimed the Officer, with amazement.

" That settles the question," remarked his Highness, coolly. " You did not know, Colonel, whether Mynheer Bowelt were honest or brave. He is neither the one nor the other."

Then, without moving a muscle, and still watching the surging of the rabble, he continued :

" Now to the Buytenhof, Colonel ! There, I believe we shall see something quite out of the common."

The Officer bowed, and followed his superior without a word.

A dense throng filled the square and surrounded the

prison. Tilly's dragoons, however, still restrained the mob with the same careless good-humour and unyielding firmness. But soon the Count heard the increasing roar made by the approaching rush of men, and beheld the foremost waves of the living cataract. Then, waving in the air above clenched fists and glittering weapons, he caught sight of the fatal parchment :

"By God !" he exclaimed, rising in his stirrups, and touching his Lieutenant with the pommel of his sword, "I do believe the hounds have got their order."

"Yes, cowardly devils that they are !" cried the Lieutenant.

It was only too true, and with howls of delight the order was welcomed by the Burgher-Guard.

They immediately moved forward, and marched with lowered arms and shouts of derision towards Tilly's dragoons.

But the Count was not the man to let them overstep the proper distance.

"Halt !" he cried. "Halt ! And give my horse room, or I shall give the word of command to advance."

"Here is the order !" retorted a hundred scornful voices.

Stupefied with astonishment he took it, gave it a rapid glance, and then, speaking so as to be heard by all, he cried :

"The men who have signed this order are the executioners of Cornelius de Witt, neither more nor less ! For me, I had rather have lost my two hands than have written a single line of this accursed order."

And thrusting back with the pommel of his sword the man who was about to take the order from him, he continued :

"Stop a moment ; a paper of this sort is a document of importance, and must be preserved."

He folded the order, and carefully placed it in the pocket of his tunic. Then turning to his troop, he shouted :

"Tilly's Cavalry, to the right about !" adding in

lowered tones, but audible enough to many, "And now, cut-throats, to your business!"

A terrific yell, uniting all the malignant hatred and demoniacal satisfaction storming the Buytenhof, hailed the departure of the cavalry as they slowly defiled from the ground.

The Count lingered behind, facing to the last the mad rabble, which pushed steadily forward as his horse yielded them ground.

Evidently John de Witt had not exaggerated the peril of their position when, in helping his brother to get up, he emphasised the necessity for haste.

At last Cornelius, leaning on the ex-Grand-Pensionary's arm, was descending the staircase leading to the prison courtyard. At the foot he met the fair Rosa, shaking with terror.

"Oh, Mynheer John, it is too dreadful!" she gasped.

"But why so, child, why so?"

"They say men have gone to the Town Hall demanding an order for the dismissal of Tilly's Cavalry from duty here."

"God help us!" cried John; "for if the Cavalry have to leave, we are indeed undone."

"But," said the trembling girl, "if I might advise you——"

"Speak, child. What marvel if God should speak to me by your mouth?"

"Well, Mynheer John, I would not go out by the principal thoroughfare."

"And why not, when Tilly's Cavalry are still on guard?"

"Yes, but till it is cancelled, the order is to stay before the prison."

"Well?"

"Have you one authorising the Guard to escort you out of the town?"

"No."

"Then the instant you have passed the first horsemen you will fall into the hands of the people."

"But there is the Burgher-Guard."

"The Burgher-Guard, indeed! They are the most bloodthirsty of all."

"What is to be done, then?"

"In your place, Mynheer John," continued the girl, diffidently, "I would leave by the postern. It opens out on a deserted street, for everybody is in the high-road waiting at the chief entrance. Then I would make straight for the gate of the town by which you wish to go out."

"But my brother cannot walk," said John.

"I will try," answered Cornelius, with an expression of sublime resolution.

"But have you not your carriage?" questioned the girl.

"The carriage is yonder before the great gate."

"I thought your coachman was devoted to your interest," she said; "and I told him to go and wait for you at the postern."

The two brothers glanced affectionately at each other, and then concentrated all their gratitude in an expressive glance at the young girl.

"Now it only remains to be seen," said the Grand Pensionary, "if Gryphus is willing to open this door."

"You may be sure he will do nothing of the kind," said Rosa.

"Well, then, in that case what can we do?"

"I was certain beforehand of his refusal, and just now, while he was talking with a dragoon from a prison window, I took the key from the bunch."

"And you have the key?"

"Here it is, Mynheer John."

"Child," said Cornelius, "except the Bible which you will find in my cell, I have nothing to give you in return for the service you have done us. It is the farewell present of a man of honour; may it bring you good luck!"

"Thank you, Mynheer Cornelius; I will never part with it." Then, sighing, she said to herself, "What an unlucky thing it is I cannot read!"

"Listen!" said John. "The appalling din grows worse each moment. I am convinced we have no time to lose."

"Come, then," said the pretty Frisian, and she led the two brothers by a back passage to the other side of the prison.

Still guided by Rosa, they descended a staircase of a dozen steps or so, crossed a small courtyard with embattled walls, and, the arched door having been opened, they found themselves outside the prison. There, in a deserted street, their carriage, with lowered doorstep, stood waiting for them.

"Quick, quick, quick! Do you not hear them, masters?" cried the terrified coachman.

After making Cornelius get first into the carriage, the Grand Pensionary turned towards the girl.

"Good-bye, child," he said; "nothing we might say could ever express one half our indebtedness to you. To God we commend you, and may He remember how you have saved the lives of two men."

The Grand Pensionary held out his hand to Rosa, who grasped it and kissed it respectfully.

"Go, go!" she cried. "They are forcing in the gate."

John de Witt hastened to get in beside his brother, and, drawing to the apron of the carriage, he called out: "To the Tol-Hek!"

The Tol-Hek was the barrier that opened on the road leading to the shore at Scheveningen, where a small craft was awaiting the two brothers.

Then, drawn at full gallop by a fine pair of Flemish horses, off dashed the carriage with its fugitives.

Rosa did not take her eyes off it till it had turned the corner of the street.

Then she went in again, locked the gate after her, and flung the key into a well.

The noise which she had imagined to be the people bursting open the prison door was, in fact, caused by their hurling themselves against it, directly they had compelled the cavalry to evacuate the square facing the Buytenhof.

Ponderous and massive as it was, the door could not, obviously, hold out much longer, and though, to do him justice, the gaoler Gryphus had obstinately refused to open it, he began, white with fear, to ask himself whether it would not be better to open it than to let it be battered to pieces.

At that moment he felt some one gently pulling his coat. He turned and saw his daughter.

"You hear the maddened crew?" he said.

"I hear them so well, father, that if I were you——"

"You would open to them?"

"Oh no! I would leave them to burst open the door."

"But they will kill me!"

"Certainly if they see you."

"And how can they fail to see me?"

"Hide yourself."

"How? Where?"

"In the secret dungeon."

"But you, child?"

"I will go down into it with you, father. We will shut the door on ourselves; then when they have left the prison, we will come out of our hiding-place."

"By God, you are right!" cried Gryphus. "What a wonderful thing it is there should be so much sense in such a little head."

Then, as the door was yielding, to the intense exultation of the mob, Rosa, opening a small trapdoor, exclaimed:

"Come, come, father!"

"But what about our prisoners?" he replied.

"Heaven will watch over them, father, and you must let me look after you."

Gryphus followed his daughter, and the trapdoor closed over their heads just as the other door, splintered from top to bottom, let in the rabble.

The dungeon in which Rosa had made her father take refuge, and which was called the secret dungeon, promised absolute safety to the two persons whom we

must now leave there for a while. It was only known to the authorities, who on occasion made use of it to confine some great criminal on whose account a rising or a rescue was to be feared.

The mob rushed into the prison, shouting :

“Death to the traitors ! To the gallows with Cornelius de Witt ! Put him to death ! Put him to death !”

CHAPTER IV

A BLOODY DEED

HIS face still shadowed by his great hat, still leaning on the Officer's arm, still wiping his forehead and his lips with his handkerchief, the young man, concealed in the shadow of a pent-house overhanging a closed shop, stood watching from a corner near the Buytenhof the infuriated populace whose savage frenzy was now at its height.

"Oh, I think you are right, Van Deken," he remarked to the Officer; "the order signed by the deputies is in fact the death-warrant of Mynheer Cornelius. Listen to the people! They have quite made up their minds about what they want with the De Witts!"

"I never heard such a pandemonium," said the Officer. "It sounds as if they had found the prisoner's cell. Stop! isn't that the window of the room where Mynheer Cornelius was confined?"

A man had seized with both hands the iron bars enclosing the window of Cornelius's cell, which he had left barely ten minutes before, and was violently shaking them.

"Gone! Gone! Where has he got to?"

"What! How can he have gone?" asked the people in the road outside, who had arrived late, and could not force their way into the overcrowded prison.

"Gone! gone!" repeated the man, beside himself with rage; "he has escaped!"

"What is the man saying?" asked his Highness, turning pale.

"Oh! he is saying what would be excellent news if it were true, your Highness."

"Yes, certainly, it would be capital news if it were true; unfortunately, it cannot be."

"Still, look! said the Officer.

True enough, other angry faces, grinding their teeth with rage, showed themselves at the windows, shouting:

"He is saved! He has escaped! They have let him get away!"

And the mob who remained in the street below repeated with hideous oaths:

"Saved! Escaped! Let us run after them, let us pursue them!"

"It really seems, your Highness, that Mynheer Cornelius has escaped," said the Officer.

"Yes, from prison perhaps," was the answer, "but not from the town; you will see, Van Deken, that the poor man will find the gate closed which he expected to find open."

"Has an order been given, then, to close the town gates, your Highness?"

"No; I think not. Who would have given such an order?"

"Well, then, what leads you to suppose they are closed?"

"There is such a thing as Fatality," carelessly replied his Highness; "the greatest men have sometimes fallen a victim to Fatality."

The Officer felt a shiver run through his frame as he realised in some way not to be explained that the prisoner was doomed.

At this moment a roar like a crash of thunder burst from the rabble, for it was only too plain that Cornelius de Witt was no longer in the prison.

Indeed, Cornelius and John had by this time passed the Vyver and turned into the main thoroughfare leading to the Tol-Hek, recommending the coachman to slacken the speed of his horses so that the passing of the carriage should not arouse suspicion.

But when he was halfway down this street and saw the barrier in the distance, when he felt that prison and death were behind him, and life and liberty in front of him, the coachman flung precaution to the winds and again quickened his horses to a gallop.

Suddenly he stopped.

"What is the matter?" asked John, passing his head through the carriage door.

"Alas! masters," cried the coachman, "it is——"

Fear suffocated the honest fellow's voice.

"Well, say quick what it is," continued the Grand Pensionary.

"Just this—the Gate is closed."

"What! the Gate closed! But it is never the custom to close the gate during the day."

"Well, look!"

John de Witt leant out of the carriage, and saw that the barrier was assuredly closed.

"Go on all the same," he said; "I have the order of commutation with me; the Gatekeeper will open the Gate."

The carriage started off again, but it was plain that the coachman no longer urged on his horses with the same confidence.

Further, in putting his head through the carriage-door, John de Witt had been seen and recognised by a brewer, who having been delayed from going with his companions, was now shutting his doors in haste so as to rejoin them at the Buytenhof.

Greatly astonished, he cried out, and ran after two other men who were hurrying on in front of him. He overtook them when they had gone about a hundred yards and spoke to them. The three men stopped, watched the carriage which was almost disappearing in the distance, but were still uncertain as to its occupants.

Meanwhile the carriage arrived at the Tol-Hek.

"Open!" cried the coachman.

"Open!" retorted the Gatekeeper, appearing on the threshold of his lodge; "open! and what with?"

"What the devil! With the key, of course!" exclaimed the coachman.

"With the key, no doubt; but first you must have your key."

"What! you haven't got the key of the Gate?" asked the coachman.

"No."

"What have you done with it?"

"It has been taken from me."

"By whom?"

"By some one who was anxious that no one should leave the town."

"My good fellow," said the Grand Pensionary, putting forth his head from the carriage-window, risking all to gain all, "my good fellow, it is for me, John de Witt and for my brother Cornelius whom I am taking into exile."

"Oh! Mynheer de Witt, I am dreadfully distressed," said the Gatekeeper, running towards the carriage "but on my honour the key has been taken from me."

"When?"

"This morning."

"By whom?"

"By a young man of about twenty-two, pale and thin."

"And why did you give it up to him?"

"Because he had an order signed and sealed."

"By whom?"

"By the gentlemen of the Town Hall."

"That settles it," said Cornelius, quickly; "we are lost, without question."

"Do you know if the same precaution has been taken everywhere?"

"I do not."

"Let us be off," said John to the coachman. "God bids man do everything he can to save his life. Quick as you can drive to another Gate!"

Then, while the coachman was turning the carriage, he said to the Gatekeeper:

"Thank you for your wish to serve us, friend ; the intention must be taken for the deed ; you would have done your best to save us, and in the eyes of Heaven it is the same as if you had succeeded."

"Alas !" ejaculated the Gatekeeper, "look there !"

"Drive through that group at a gallop," cried John to the coachman, "and take the road to the left ; it is our only chance."

The centre of the group John referred to was composed of the three men whose notice had been attracted to the carriage, and who had not lost sight of it.

They, in the interim, while John conversed with the Gatekeeper, had had their numbers increased by seven or eight other men. Plainly these fresh arrivals had evil designs upon the carriage. And seeing the horses bearing down on them at full gallop, they formed in a line across the road, brandishing their cudgels and shouting, "Stop ! Stop !"

The coachman in return leant over and lashed them with his whip.

Carriage and men crashed together.

Shut up as they were in the carriage, the brothers De Witt could see nothing. But they felt the horses flung back on their haunches—a violent collision followed. There was a moment's pause and a shuddering of the whole vehicle ; then it again rolled on, passing over something round and soft, like a man's prostrate body, to pursue its way amidst a torrent of imprecations.

"I fear, alas !" said Cornelius, "that we have injured some one."

"Gallop ! gallop !" cried John.

But, on the contrary, the coachman suddenly stopped.

"What is it now ?" asked John.

"Can you not see ?"

John looked.

At the end of the road the carriage must follow loomed the vast horde of the Buytenhof advancing with the swiftness and roar of a hurricane.

"Stop and save yourself," said John to the coachman; "it is useless to go further; we are lost."

"Here they are! here they are!" yelled five hundred voices.

"Yes, here they are, the traitors! murderers! assassins!" those who were following the carriage replied to those who preceded it.

The former were carrying in their arms the bruised body of one of their companions who had been knocked down in trying to seize the horses reins.

This was the body the two brothers had felt the carriage roll over.

The coachman stopped: but in spite of his master's pressing entreaties he refused to run away.

Immediately the carriage was seized by those who were pursuing it and those that had met it.

Momentarily it rose above the rabid crew like a floating island.

Then again the floating island paused. A farrier with the stroke of a hammer had felled one of the horses, which fell headlong in the traces.

At this moment the shutter of a window opened, and the ashen face and melancholy eyes of the young man appeared, watching for the scene that was about to be enacted. Behind him was the head of the Officer, who was almost as ghastly pale as himself.

"My God! My God! What awful crime are they about!" groaned the Officer.

"An awful business, it must be owned," replied his Highness.

"Ah! your Highness, see! they are dragging the Grand Pensionary from the carriage, they are striking him, tearing him limb from limb!"

"Those people must be maddened with rage," remarked the young man, in the same impassive voice with which he had spoken hitherto.

"And now they are dragging Cornelius out of the carriage—Cornelius who is already all bruised and mutilated by the rack. Oh, look! look!"

"Yes, indeed, it is Cornelius."

With a shuddering cry the Officer turned away his head.

What had happened was this. As he stood on the last step, before he had so much as touched the ground, Cornelius was knocked down with the blow of an iron bar, which broke in his head.

He struggled to his feet, however, but only to fall again immediately.

Then, taking him by his feet, the men drew him into the thick of the mob, and as he went a track of blood marked the way his body had been borne, and the mob closed round him with shouts of devilish triumph.

Then happened what had seemed impossible; the young man turned more deathly white, and for half a second his eyelids were lowered.

The Officer saw this flicker of pity, the first his stern companion had involuntarily manifested, and wishing to profit by such unwonted feeling, he exclaimed:

"Come, come, your Highness; see they are going to kill the Grand Pensionary too!"

But the young man had already reopened his eyes.

"Of a truth, the people are merciless. It is not wise to deceive them."

"Is it not possible," implored the Officer, "to save this wretched man, who educated your Highness? If there is any way of doing so, tell me how, and even if it should cost me my life——"

The brows of William of Orange, for it was he, met in a sinister frown, veiling the flash of anger that leapt from his eyes, as he answered:

"Colonel van Deken, go, I beg you, and summon my troops, and bid them hold themselves ready for anything that may happen."

"But can I leave your Highness alone here with these cut-throats?"

"It is quite unnecessary for you to be alarmed on my account, since I am not," said the Prince shortly—
"Go!"

The Officer left the room with an alacrity which testified less to his habit of obedience than to his joy in no longer having to watch the grisly murder of the second brother.

He had scarcely shut the door of the room, when John who, by a last desperate effort, having reached the doorstep of a house almost opposite that which hid his pupil, reeled under the blows dealt him on all sides simultaneously, as he cried out :

“ My brother ! where is my brother ? ”

One of the maddened ruffians knocked off his hat with his fist. Another displayed before him the blood staining his hands ; he had disembowelled Cornelius, and, whilst others dragged the corpse to the gallows, he had hurried up so as not to lose the chance of doing the same by the Grand Pensionary.

John gave a heart-rending cry, and drew one of his hands over his eyes.

“ Ah, you shut your eyes, do you ? ” said one of the soldiers of the Burgher-Guard. “ Well, I will tear them out for you.”

And he thrust his pike at John’s face, and the blood spurted out.

“ My brother ! ” cried De Witt, trying to see through the stream of blood blinding him what had become of Cornelius ; “ my brother ! ”

“ Go you and join him ! ” shouted another villain, pressing his musket against John’s temple, and pulling the trigger. But the gun missed fire.

Then the ruffian reversed his weapon, and, seizing it by the barrel in both hands, he felled John de Witt with the butt-end. John staggered, and fell at his feet. But immediately lifting himself with a last effort, he cried :
“ My brother ! ”

So agonizing was the cry, the young man closed the shutter. But there was not much more to see, for a third assassin fired a pistol at close quarters, and blew out the victim’s brains.

John de Witt fell, this time not to rise again. Then

each of the ruffians, emboldened by the final catastrophe, wished to use his weapon on the corpse. Each wished to thrust at it with mace, sword, or knife ; each wished to draw his drop of blood, rend off his fragment of the clothes.

Then, when the brothers were indisputably dead, their garments torn to shreds, and their bodies stripped, the mob dragged them naked and bleeding to an improvised gibbet, where they were hanged by their feet by bungling executioners.

Then came forward the most dastardly of the rabble, who, not having dared to strike the living, cut into ribands the dead flesh, and then went to sell little pieces of John and Cornelius in the town, at ten *sous* the piece.

We are not in a position to state whether through the almost imperceptible chink of the shutter the young man witnessed the end of the gruesome scene, but at the very moment when they were hanging the two martyrs on the gallows, he crossed the throng which was too keenly engaged on the delightful work it was occupied with to permit itself to be distracted by him, and so reached the still-closed Gate of the Tol-Hek.

"Ah, Sir!" exclaimed the Gatekeeper, "you have brought us back the key?"

"Yes, friend, here it is," answered the young man.

"'Tis a terrible thing you did not bring me back this key half an hour sooner," said the Gatekeeper, with a deep sigh.

"Pray, why do you think so?" asked the young man.

"Because I might have opened the Gate to the Mynheers de Witt. As it was, they found the Gate locked, and were forced to go back on their way. So they fell into the very midst of those who were hunting them down."

"Gate! Gate!" cried a voice, seemingly that of a very hurried man.

The Prince turned round, and recognised Colonel van Deken.

"Ah ! that's you, Colonel !" he said. "You have not yet left The Hague ? You are carrying out my orders in a very leisurely manner."

"Your Highness," replied the Colonel, "this is the third Gate I have come to. I found two others locked."

"Indeed ! Well, this worthy fellow will open this one for us. Open, my friend," said the Prince to the Gatekeeper, who had remained dumbfounded at hearing Van Deken address the sallow young man with whom he had been talking so familiarly as "your Highness." So, to atone for his previous blunder, he hastened to open the Tol-Hek, which rolled back creaking on its ponderous hinges.

"Will your Highness take my horse ?" the Colonel asked William.

"No, thank you, Colonel ; I have a mount waiting for me close by."

And, taking a gold whistle from his pocket—an instrument in frequent use at this period for summoning servants—he blew a shrill, long-drawn note, in answer to which an equerry on horseback, leading a second horse came riding up.

William vaulted on the horse's back without using the stirrup, and, spurring the animal, he made for the Leyden road.

Arrived there he turned round. The Colonel was following at the distance of a horse's length. The Prince beckoned to him to ride up alongside him.

"Do you know," he said, without drawing rein, "that those ruffians have killed John de Witt, too, and they killed Cornelius."

"Alas !" regretfully answered the Colonel, "I should prefer that there were still those two stumbling-blocks between your Highness and the Stadtholderate of Holland."

"No doubt," retorted the young man, "it might have been better had certain tragedies that have happened not happened. But, after all, what is, is ; we have done nothing to bring it about. We must press on, Colonel, s

as to be at Alphen before the message the States will certainly send me reaches the camp."

The Colonel bowed, and, allowing the Prince to ride on ahead of him, he fell back to the same distance in the rear he had held before the Prince addressed him.

"What would I not give," muttered William of Orange, with an ill-omened frown, tightening his thin lips and digging the spurs into his horse's sides, "if only I could see King Louis' face when he hears of the fate that has befallen his good friends the Mynheers de Witt! Oh, sun, sun, sun! have a care to your splendour!"

And the young Prince, the ruthless enemy of the Grand Monarch, the Stadtholder so insecure but the day before in his new dignity, for whom the Burghers of The Hague had made a footstep to power of the corpses of the two De Witts, martyrs in the sight of God and man—the young Prince galloped proudly on, mounted on his good horse.

CHAPTER V

THE TULIP-FANCIER AND HIS NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOUR

WHILE the Burghers of The Hague were tearing in pieces the corpses of John and Cornelius, and while William of Orange—after satisfying himself that his two foes were really and truly dead—was galloping back on the Leyden road, followed by Colonel van Deken, whom he found a trifle too tender-hearted to honour with further confidences, faithful Craeke, astride another good horse, and never dreaming of the hideous catastrophe that had occurred since his departure, hurried along the shady high-road till he was well out of the town and its neighbouring villages.

Once satisfied he was not being pursued, he left his horse in a stable, so as not to excite suspicion, and continued his way modestly enough by the canal boats which would one after the other take him to Dordrecht. With wise cunning he took those ways that were shortest—sinuous water-ways caressing with their humid arms pleasant islands fringed with willows, rushes, and flowering grasses, in which fat herds glistening in the sun browsed with careless content.

While still some distance off, Craeke recognised at the foot of its hill, which bristled with windmills, the bright clean town of Dordrecht. He saw the pretty row of houses with their white-painted beams bathing their foundations of brick in the water, and fluttering from their broad balconies rich rugs of silk embroidered with gold, marvels of Indian and Chinese looms, and

alongside these the great lines that dangle ever ready to entrap the voracious eels attracted by the daily dole of kitchen refuse.

From the deck of the boat Craeke saw, across the revolving wings of the mills on the slope of the hill, the pretty house that was the object of his journey. The gables of its roof were lost in the yellow foliage of a screen of poplars, and the building itself stood out against a dark background of gigantic elms. It was so situated that the sun falling on it as through a funnel, dried up, warmed, and even made a fertilising agent of the clinging fogs which the barrier of green could not prevent the wind bringing morning and night from the water.

Disembarking in the midst of the usual bustle of the town, Craeke turned his steps straight towards the house, the interior of which we will describe in a few words.

White, neat, glistening—even more daintily washed, more scrupulously waxed in the hidden corners than in the open spaces—the house contained a really happy being.

This happy being—*rara avis*, as Juvenal has it—was Doctor van Baerle, Cornelius's godson. From his infancy he had lived in the house we have pictured to our reader, for it was the house where both his father and grandfather, merchant princes of the princely town of Dordrecht, were born.

Mynheer van Baerle, his father, in trade with the Indies, had amassed three or four hundred thousand guilders, which Van Baerle, the son, on the death of his respected and beloved parents, had found perfectly unworn in 1668, although the guilders were coined some in 1640 and some in 1610—thus showing they were the guilders of Van Baerle the father and also of Van Baerle the grandfather. These four hundred thousand guilders, let me hasten to add, were only the pocket-money, so to say, of Cornelius van Baerle, the hero of this story, for his estates in the Province brought him in an income of about ten thousand guilders a year.

When, just three months after his wife's death—who

seemed to have gone before him to make the road of death as easy for him as she had made the road of life—that worthy citizen, Cornelius's father, was leaving this world for a better, he said to his son, whom he was embracing for the last time :

“ Drink, eat, and spend, if you would really live. For to toil all day on a wooden stool or leathern chair, in a laboratory or shop—call that what you will, you cannot call it life. You will die when your hour comes, and if you have not the good fortune to have a son, our name will die out, and my guilders will be surprised at finding themselves in the possession of an unknown master—my guilders which have never been weighed except by my father, myself, and the coiner. Whatever folly you commit, do not imitate the example of your godfather Cornelius de Witt, who has plunged headlong into politics,—that most thankless of all careers, which for him will certainly end in ruin.”

This estimable Mynheer van Baerle then died, leaving his son Cornelius broken-hearted, for he was very indifferent to the guilders, but his father he had really loved.

So Cornelius was left alone in the great house. In vain his godfather Cornelius offered him employment in the public service, in vain he tempted him with the bait of fame and repute, when he bade Cornelius embark on *The Seven Provinces* with the celebrated De Ruyter, who in command of a hundred and thirty-nine ships, went off to face alone the united powers of France and England.

When, steered by the pilot Leger, Cornelius had come within musket-shot of *The Prince*, with the Duke of York, brother to the King of England, on board ; when on De Ruyter's sudden and unexpected attack, fearing his ship was about to be taken, the Duke of York had only just time to take refuge on board the *St. Michael* ; when he, Cornelius, had seen the *St. Michael* shattered and riddled by the Dutch bullets, leave the fighting-line when he had seen the *Earl of Sandwich* blown up and four hundred men perishing in the flames or in the sea ; when finally, he had witnessed twenty vessels shivered into

fragments with three thousand killed, five thousand wounded, and in the end nothing decided one way or the other for both sides claimed the victory, and it still remained to be fought out, and only another name was added on the roll of battles, the battle of Southwold Bay ; when he had calculated the loss of time to a reflective man like himself, in having to close his eyes and ears while his fellow-creatures were blowing each other to bits with cannon-shot ;—Cornelius bade farewell to De Ruyter, to Cornelius de Witt, and to fame. Then he kissed the hands of the Grand Pensionary, whom he held in profound veneration, and returned to his home at Dordrecht.

In his twenty-eighth year he was endowed with the love of a peaceful life, with nerves and muscles of steel, with keen eyesight, and above his four hundred thousand guilders of capital and his income of ten thousand more, he was further endowed with the conviction that a man has always received from Heaven too much to be happy, but enough not to be so.

To give himself a pleasant occupation Cornelius took up the study of botany and insects ; he collected and classified all the flora of the islands, arranged the entomology of the Province, and wrote a treatise on it with plates engraved from his own drawings. At last, not knowing what to do with his time, still less with his money, which was steadily accumulating at a distracting rate, he elected, from all the extravagant hobbies of his country and day, one of the most elegant and costly—the culture of a flower he loved—the tulip, to wit.

As every one knows, it was the time when, rivalling each other in the growth of this special flower, which came originally from the East, the Dutch and Portuguese had almost brought about its apotheosis.

In a little while the fame of Mynheer van Baerle's tulips spread from Dordrecht to Mons, and his beds, pits, drying-rooms, and drawers of bulbs were visited as were the galleries and libraries of Alexandria by distinguished Roman travellers.

Van Baerle began by spending his income in establishing his collection, then he used his new guilders in bringing it to perfection, and his work rewarded him with magnificent results. He created five new tulips; one he called *Jeanne*, which was his mother's name; one he called the Baerle, after his father; and one *Cornelius*, as a tribute of affection to his godfather. The other names, which we have forgotten, may be found by amateurs in the catalogues of that time.

In 1672, at the beginning of the year, Cornelius de Witt went to Dordrecht to stay for three months in his old family residence; for not only was Cornelius born at Dordrecht, but the family of De Witt came originally from that town.

Cornelius was then beginning, as William of Orange said, to experience great unpopularity. His fellow-citizens, the worthy inhabitants of Dordrecht, however, did not yet consider him fit only for the gallows, and though somewhat dissatisfied with his inflexible republicanism, they were at the same time proud of his personal worth and on his arrival duly offered him the city loving-cup.

After thanking his fellow-citizens, Cornelius went to see his old home, and ordered the carrying out of certain repairs before his wife should come to stay there with her children.

Then the great man turned his steps towards his godson's house—who was probably the only being in Dordrecht unaware of the great man's presence in his native town.

While Cornelius de Witt had roused hostility by sowing mischievous seeds, commonly called political passions, Van Baerle, on the other hand, by caring not one whit for the study of politics, and absorbed as he was in the culture of his tulips, had attracted universal good-will.

Not only was Van Baerle idolised by his servants and workpeople, but he was constitutionally incapable of supposing that in all the world a man was to be found who wished another man evil for evil's sake.

Yet we must own, to the disgrace of humanity, Cornelius van Baerle had without knowing it a much more savage, more rancorous, more relentless enemy than ever Cornelius and John de Witt had in those Orangists, the most inimical to that fraternal affection which, unclouded through life, did not fail even in death.

When Cornelius first began to give himself up to the culture of tulips, spending all his income and his father's guilders on this fancy, there was living next door to him in Dordrecht a burgher named Isaac Boxtel, who from his very childhood had been swayed by the same passion, and was simply transported with delight at the mere sound of the word *tulban*, the original name, as we are informed by the most learned of French florists, which in the language of the Cingalese was given to this consummate floral creation.

Boxtel, unluckily, was not so rich as Van Baerle. Therefore it was only by the expenditure of infinite toil and patience that he had made the necessary garden near his house in Dordrecht. He had blended the soil according to the most approved methods, and taken pains that his beds had just the right amount of warmth and fresh air authorised by professional gardeners.

Isaac knew the temperature of his frames almost to the twentieth part of a degree. He calculated the force of currents of air, and adapted them to the swaying of the stems of his blooms. Eventually his choicest flowers won ample recognition. They were beautiful, they were rare. Many amateur tulip-growers came to see those grown by Boxtel. At last he produced from the Linnæus and the Tournefort a tulip of his own name. This tulip became celebrated. It had crossed France, had been introduced into Spain, had penetrated even Portugal, and King Don Alphonso VI., who, driven out of Lisbon, had retired to the Island of Terceira, where he amused himself, not like the great Condé in watering his carnations, but in cultivating tulips, had exclaimed, "Really, not bad," on beholding the *Boxtel*.

Suddenly, Cornelius van Baerle, who, after all the

studies he had devoted himself to, had now been seized by the tulip mania, altered the walls of his house in Dordrecht adjoining Boxtel's, and raised by one story a certain building in his courtyard. This story took away just half a degree of the sun's warmth, and consequently replaced it by half a degree of cold in Boxtel's garden, not to speak of the fact that it interfered with the wind and upset all his calculations and horticultural arrangements.

After all, perhaps, this misfortune was not of so much consequence, Boxtel thought. Van Baerle was only a painter, that is to say, a kind of fool who tries to reproduce on canvas the wonderful beauties of nature, and in so doing only produces daubs. The painter was probably raising his studio to procure better light, which he had perfect right to do if he chose. Mynheer van Baerle was a painter, as Mynheer Boxtel was a tulip-grower; he needed sun for his pictures, and he took half a degree from Mynheer Boxtel's tulips. The law was for Mynheer van Baerle. *Bene sit.*

Besides, Boxtel had discovered that too much sun was bad for tulips, and that this flower grows better and more brilliantly coloured with the less fierce sun of morning and evening than when it receives the stronger glow of the midday sun.

Hence he was almost grateful to Cornelius van Baerle for having built him a sun-screen for nothing.

Perhaps this was not strictly true, and what Boxtel said with regard to his neighbour was not all he really thought. But wise people find in philosophy amazing consolations for the greatest disasters.

Imagine, then, the state of mind of the wretched Boxtel when he saw the windows of the newly built room filled with bulbs, seedlings, tulips in open stands, tulips in pots—everything, in fact, required by the most inveterate and determined tulip-fancier.

There were packets of labels, there were pigeon-holes, there were boxes with compartments, and wire-netting to enclose the pigeon-holes, so as to keep the air fresh with

admitting mice, weevils, dormice, field-mice and rats, finished connoisseurs of tulips at two thousand *francs* a bulb.

Boxtel was completely taken aback when he saw all his outfit, but he did not yet grasp the full measure of his ill-luck. Every one knew Van Baerle was a lover of all that was beautiful. He went straight to nature for his pictures, which were as finished as those of Gerard Dow, his master, and Van Mieris, his friend. Surely, it was possible that, wishing to paint the interior of a tulip-grower's establishment, he had collected together in his new studio all the correct accessories. Soothed though he was by his mistaken idea, Boxtel was yet unable to resist the verish curiosity consuming him. When evening came, he set a ladder against the wall dividing the two gardens and looked over into that of his neighbour Van Baerle. He rubbed his eyes incredulously, only to be the more convinced that the earth of a large square bed formerly filled with various plants was removed and placed in orders of compost mixed with river-mud—a blending of soil most advantageous for tulips—and the whole was covered in with edgings of turf to prevent the shifting of the soil. Here was morning sun and setting sun ; shade, too, for protection from the noonday heat ; water in abundance, and within reach ; a south-south-west aspect ;—in short, everything desirable not only to ensure success, but development. Doubt was no longer possible ; Van Baerle had become a tulip-grower.

Immediately Boxtel pictured to himself this man of great learning, with his four hundred thousand guilders, besides his income of ten thousand, spending all his moral and physical resources in magnificent style on the culture of tulips. He foresaw Van Baerle's success in a vague but near future, and his anguish at the mere imagination of this success caused his hands to let go their hold, his knees to give way, and he rolled in despair to the bottom of the ladder.

So it was not for painted tulips, but for living tulips that Van Baerle had stolen his half a degree of sunlight !

Van Baerle, moreover, would have the most splendid sunny aspect, and further a huge room in which to keep his bulbs and seedlings ; a well-lighted, airy, ventilated room—a luxury denied to Boxtel, who had been obliged to use his bedroom for the purpose, and, lest he should interfere with the growth of his seedlings, had betaken himself to sleep in the loft.

Yes, door to door, wall to wall, Boxtel and his rival were to live. Perhaps Van Baerle would emulate his creations, possibly surpass them, and, fearful thought ! this rival, instead of being some obscure, unknown gardener, was the godson of Mynheer Cornelius de Witt, that is to say, a celebrity.

Boxtel, you see, was of a meaner spirit than Porus, who consoled himself for being defeated by Alexander with the fame of his conqueror.

And, just think if ever Van Baerle discovered a new tulip, and called it John de Witt, after naming one Cornelius ! It was enough to make a man choke with rage.

So, with envious foresight, Boxtel, the prophet of his own misfortunes, augured all that was about to happen. Poor Boxtel ! after this fatal discovery he passed a night execrable beyond belief.

CHAPTER VI

PROFESSIONAL HATRED

FROM that moment, Boxtel, instead of being absorbed by a pleasant occupation, lived under a constant dread. Allowing his mind to dwell morbidly on the possible disasters resulting to himself from his neighbour's hobby, he lost the health and moral courage engendered by work of body and brain for a favourite pastime.

On the other hand, Van Baerle, from the moment he brought the keen intelligence with which Nature had endowed him to bear on his latest fancy, succeeded in producing the most beautiful tulips.

He variegated their colours, altered their forms, added to the species in a way that Haarlem and Leyden—towns possessing the best soil, and the most perfect climate—were quite unable to rival.

He was of the ingenious and ingenuous school, which took for its motto in the seventh century the aphorism, further improved upon in 1653 by one of its adepts : "To despise flowers is to insult God"—a premiss on which the school of tulip-fanciers—the most exclusive of all schools—in 1653 founded the following syllogism :

"To despise flowers is to insult God.

"The more beautiful a flower is, the more does a man in despising it insult God.

"The tulip is the most beautiful of all flowers.

"Therefore he who despises the tulip insults God specially and beyond measure."

An argument, supported by a certain amount of uncharitableness, that seemed to justify the four or five

thousand tulip-worshippers of Holland, France, and Portugal—not to speak of those of Ceylon, India, and China—in excommunicating and declaring schismatic heretical, and worthy of death, the rest of the universe consisting of a few hundred million of men, who were indifferent to the cult of the tulip.

Beyond dispute, except in such a cause, Boxide the mortal enemy of Van Baerle, would not have served under the same flag with him.

We have shown how Van Baerle had won numerous prizes and gained a great reputation, so that Boxide vanished from the list of famous tulip-growers, being replaced by the modest and simple *savant* Cornelius van Baerle.

Thus from the most insignificant branches grafting would produce the lordliest shoots, and the eglantine, with its four colourless petals, is the origin of the splendid fragrant rose. Thus, too, royal houses have sometimes come to birth in a woodcutter's cottage or a fisherman's hut.

Entirely devoted to his business of sowing, planting, and gathering, *fêted* by all the tulip-fanciers of Europe, Van Baerle never dreamed that at his very side was an unhappy dethroned King whose crown he had usurped. He continued his experiments and his triumphs, and in two years he covered his borders with such marvellous creations that no one, except possibly Shakespeare and Rubens, had ever produced such works of art since God brought the world out of *chaos*.

Thus it was only necessary to see Boxide at this time to have an idea of a lost soul forgotten by Dante. While Van Baerle weeded, dressed, and watered his beds while kneeling on the grassy slope he analysed each variety of a tulip-bloom, and pondered over the changes he might bring to pass, the possible blendings of one colour into another, Boxide, hidden behind a little sycamore he had planted beside the wall, and made use of as a screen, with eyes starting from his head, his mouth foaming, watched his neighbour's every step, every gesture. Then, if he thought Van Baerle looked elated, if he saw

prised a smile on his lips, a gleam of pleasure in his eyes, he breathed forth such curses, and so many angry threats, that it was difficult to believe such poisonous gusts of malignity and rage would not penetrate the stems of the flowers, infecting them with germs of decay and death.

So rapid is the development of malice when it has once mastered a man, very soon Boxtel was no longer satisfied with watching Van Baerle. He felt he must see the man's powers; he was an artist, and a rival's masterpiece lay heavy on his heart.

He bought a telescope, by the aid of which he could note, as well as the owner himself, every change in the flower; from the moment when it thrusts out in the first year its pale spike from the ground till the time when, having accomplished its five years, the fine and delicate cylinder grows globular as it assumes an almost imperceptible blush of colour, and unfolds the petals of the flower, only then displaying the hidden treasures of its calyx.

Alas! how frequently the wretched jealous creature, perched on his ladder, saw in Van Baerle's flower-beds tulips that almost blinded him with their beauty, and took away his breath by their perfection of form!

Then, after the first shock of admiration that thrilled him in spite of himself, the fever of envy seized him, a disease which gnaws at the heart and transforms it into myriads of serpents that devour one another, a source of mordant torture.

How often, in some terrible crisis of pain, beyond the power of words to describe, Boxtel was tempted to leap at night into the garden, and there to uproot the plants, to grind the bulbs to powder with his teeth, and, if the owner attempted to defend his tulips, to sacrifice him also in his rage.

But to destroy a tulip! That were an infamous crime in the eyes of a true lover of flowers!

It was a different matter to kill a man.

However, as Van Baerle made such strides daily in the

science which he seemed to comprehend by intuition, Boxtel reached such a paroxysm of fury that he seriously thought of throwing stones and sticks into his neighbour's tulip-beds.

But, on reflection the next day, he considered how Van Baerle, at sight of the havoc, would investigate the matter; it would be pointed out that the road was distant, that stones and sticks do not fall from heaven in the seventeenth century as in the time of the Amalekites, that the criminal, though he did his work at night, would be discovered, and not only punished by law, but moreover dishonoured for ever in the eyes of all the tulip-fanciers of Europe. So Boxtel gave an edge to his hate by cunning, and determined to vent his spite without compromising himself.

It was a long time before he saw how it could be done, but at last a happy thought occurred to him.

One evening he tied two cats together by their hind legs with a piece of cord ten feet long, and flung them from the top of the wall into the middle of the loveliest, the most noble, the most regal, bed, containing not only the *Cornelius de Witt*, but likewise the *Brabançonne*, milky white, purple, and red; the *Marbled Beauty* of Rotterdam, grey like growing flax, red, and vivid crimson; and the *Wonder* of Haarlem, the *Dark Columbine*, and the *Clouded White Columbine*.

The terrified animals, falling from the top to the bottom of the wall, first rushed across the bed trying to get away from each other till the string which held them was tightly stretched; then, feeling the impossibility of escape, they struggled to and fro, here and there, with hideous caterwaulings, mowing down the flowers with the string and floundering amongst them, till at last, after a fifteen minutes' mad struggle, having at length succeeded in breaking the string entangling them, the two toms vanished into space.

Boxtel, concealed behind his sycamore, saw nothing in the darkness of the night; but it was not difficult to imagine what was happening as he heard the maniacal

screams of the two cats, and almost bursting with spleen, he was more than satisfied.

The wish to be certain of the destruction that had been wrought was so strong within him that he actually stayed up till daylight to gloat over the condition of his neighbour's tulip-beds after the cats had done their worst.

He was frozen by the morning fog, but the cold was nothing to him; the hope of revenge warmed him through and through.

His rival's grief would repay him for all he endured.

At the first rays of the sun the door of the white house opened. Van Baerle appeared and approached his borders, smiling like a man who has slept well and had good dreams.

Suddenly he saw furrows and mounds on the earth which the evening before had been as smooth as a mirror. And the same glance revealed to him the symmetrical rows of his tulips scattered like the pikes of a battalion amongst which a bomb has exploded.

Pale as death he rushed forward. Boxtel trembled with rapture. Fifteen or twenty torn, trampled tulips lay there, some bent, others broken down altogether and already wilting; the sap flowed from their broken stems,—the precious sap which Van Baerle would willingly have redeemed at the price of his own blood.

But imagine the surprise—the ecstasy of Van Baerle! And the unutterable mortification of Boxtel! Not one of the four tulips the unhappy man had more particularly wished to destroy was touched at all. Their glorious heads rose proudly above the corpses of their companions. Consolation sufficient for Van Baerle, but enough to make the murderer, who tore out his hair at the sight of his crime—a useless crime—die of humiliation!

While grieving at the misfortune which had overtaken him, a misfortune which, thank Heaven, was less serious than it might have been, Van Baerle was at a loss to account for it. All his inquiries only resulted in the knowledge that the night had been made hideous by atrocious caterwaulings. He discovered, however, the direction

from which the cats had come from the traces left by their claws, and the fur remaining on the field of battle—fur dripping with dew, as were the leaves of the broken flowers close by. To avoid, therefore, a similar disaster occurring in the future, he ordered a young gardener to sleep every night in a sentry-box close to the borders.

Boxtel heard the order given. That same day he saw the erection of the sentry-box, and, jubilant at not having been suspected, and only filled with more animus than ever against his happy rival, he awaited a more favourable opportunity.

It was about this time that the Haarlem Tulip Society offered a prize for the discovery, we scarcely dare say the manufacture, of a large black tulip, black without spot or blemish.* The very possibility of such a thing was open to question, since at this period no dark-brown species even existed.

Hence it was bruited about that the givers of the prize might as well offer two millions as a hundred thousand guilders, for such a flower was impossible.

The world of tulip-fanciers was none the less at fever-heat with excitement. Some amateurs jumped at the idea, but without much faith in its being practicable; but so great is the power of imagination amongst florists, that while in the very beginning they considered the attempt a foregone conclusion, yet, once the prize was offered, they could think of nothing else but this great black tulip,—a wild fancy like the black swan of Horace, or the white blackbird of French legend.

Van Baerle was amongst those tulip-lovers who seized at the idea; Boxtel was of those who regarded it as a forlorn hope. Directly Van Baerle had thought out the idea in his clear and subtle brain he slowly began the work of seed-plots and all the necessary labour to evolve out of the tulips he had already produced, brown tulips from those that were red, and dark-brown from the brown.

By the next year he had created a perfect dark-brown and Boxtel saw them in his border; he, Boxtel, having only reached the stage of light-brown.

Perhaps, it were well to explain to the reader the theories proving that tulips borrow their colours from the elements ; perhaps it should be expounded how nothing is impossible to the florist who, by his patience and genius, utilises the heat of the sun, the freshness of water, the juices of the earth, and the breezes of the air. But it is not a treatise on the tulip in general, only the story of one special tulip we wish to write ; and we must confine ourselves to this story, however attractive the charms of the subject akin to it.

Once more outwitted by the superiority of his foe, Boxtel gave up the culture of tulips in disgust, and almost out of his mind, he concentrated all his faculties on the work of a spy.

His rival's house was quite open to view. The garden lay exposed to the sun ; the cabinets had glass windows revealing their contents ; shelves, cupboards, boxes, labels, —the telescope discovered everything. Boxtel left his bulbs to decay in the beds, his seedlings to dry up in their pigeon-holes, his tulips to die in the borders, and spending his life in watching, his whole soul was wrapped up in the most petty affairs of Van Baerle's house. Boxtel almost breathed through the stems of Van Baerle's tulips, he quenched his thirst by the water that was flung to them and satisfied his hunger with the soft, fine soil sprinkled by his neighbour on the choicest bulbs. But the most engrossing part of all this labour was not done in the garden.

When one o'clock struck, that is to say, the first hour of the morning, Van Baerle went up into his laboratory, into the glass room where Boxtel's telescope could follow him so well, and there, from the moment the scholar's lights, taking the place of the daylight, lit up walls and windows, Boxtel saw the inventive genius of his rival at work.

He watched him sorting his seeds, watering them with special preparations to modify their colour or deepen it. He understood what he was about when he saw him heating certain seeds, then moistening them, then blend-

ing them with others by a kind of grafting—a minute and marvellously skilful performance. He shut up in the dark those he wished to give black flowers, and exposed to the sun or the lamp those he wished to give red flowers; he set in a constant reflection of water those he wished to show white, the clear hermetical representation of the liquid element. This innocent magic, at once the fruit of a child's imaginings and a man's genius, this patient, ceaseless endeavour of which Boxtel knew himself to be incapable, caused the envious man to stake life, thought, hope in his telescope.

It was strange to how slight a degree intense interest and pride in the art of gardening had stifled Isaac's fierce jealousy and thirst for revenge. Sometimes when his telescope was fastened on Van Baerle, he fancied he was covering him with the deadly aim of a musket that could not miss, and his finger sought for the trigger to fire and kill him. But it is time we should go back and connect the one man's work and the other's espionage with the visit Cornelius de Witt, Intendant of Dykes, paid his native town.

CHAPTER VII

THE HAPPY MAN MAKES ACQUAINTANCE
WITH CALAMITY

ONE evening in the month of January, 1672, after settling his family affairs, Cornelius de Witt went to see his godson, Cornelius van Baerle.

Although he was little of a horticulturist and not much of an artist, De Witt went over the whole house, from the studio to the conservatories, from the pictures to the tulips. He thanked his godson for having gone on board the Admiral's ship, *The Seven Provinces*, to witness the battle of Southwold Bay, and for having given his name to a noble tulip—all this graciously and with the affection of a father for his son. During his visit, and while he was inspecting Van Baerle's treasures, the crowd, prompted by curiosity and even respect, waited outside the happy man's doors.

The noise made by the people attracted Boxtel's attention as he sat by his fireside taking his evening meal. He soon learnt what was going on, and climbed up to his workshop. There, in spite of the cold, he stationed himself and glued his telescope to his eye. Since the autumn of 1671, this telescope had not been of any great use to him. Tulips, susceptible to cold like all true daughters of the East, do not thrive in the open ground in winter. They need the atmosphere of a house, a cosy bed on the shelves, and the gentle nurture of a stove. Consequently, Van Baerle passed the whole winter in his study amongst his books and pictures. He went but seldom into the room where the bulbs were, except to let

in some stray shafts of sunlight, which, by opening a window, he¹ persuaded to linger a moment beside his bulbs.

On the evening we refer to, after De Witt and his godson had gone over the apartments together with a troop of servants in attendance behind them, De Witt said in low tones to Van Baerle :

“ Send your people away and let us remain alone a few moments, if possible.”

Cornelius bowed in token of assent, and presently remarked :

“ Now, Sir, would you like to visit my drying-room ? ”

The drying-room ! A tulip-fancier's pandemonium or tabernacle, or sanctum sanctorum, what you will ! This room, like Delphi of old, was forbidden ground to the profane.

No servant ever dared set foot there. Only an old Friesland woman, his nurse in former days, was allowed by Cornelius to enter this room. This old woman, since he had devoted himself to the culture of tulips, thought it wiser to put no more onions in his dishes for fear of mincing and cooking his heart's delight.

So at the mere word “ drying-room,” the men who were bearing the lights deferentially withdrew.

Van Baerle took the candles from the hand of the leader of the procession and preceded his godfather into the room.

We must explain that the drying-room was the same glass studio Boxtel was so continually examining with his telescope.

The envious wretch was on the alert as ever. First he saw the walls and windows light up. Then appeared two shadows. The one that was tall, dignified, and grave sat down beside the table on which the other had set the light.

Boxtel recognised the pale face of Cornelius de Witt, whose long black hair, parted in front, fell over his shoulders.

The Intendant, after speaking a few words to Cornelius

—of which the miserable spy could make out nothing from the movement of the lips—drew from his breast and handed to the other a carefully sealed white packet. From Cornelius's manner in taking this packet and depositing it in a cabinet, Boxtel reasoned it must contain papers of the first importance.

At first he thought this precious packet enclosed some seedling bulbs newly arrived from Bengal or Ceylon ; but his memory quickly recalled to him the fact that De Witt was less interested in tulips than in men, who are not so picturesque to look at, and far more difficult to bring to perfection. And his mind reverted to the idea that this packet could only contain papers, and papers of political importance.

But what had Cornelius to do with political papers ? Cornelius, who not only cared nothing, but boasted that he cared nothing for politics, a more abstruse science in his opinion than chemistry or even alchemy.

No doubt this was some state secret that De Witt, whom his fellow-countrymen were already beginning to honour with a certain measure of unpopularity, was entrusting to the care of his godson, Van Baerle,—a fine piece of stratagem on the part of the Intendant, for it would never occur to any one to search for such papers in Cornelius's house, who was the sworn foe of all intrigue.

Further, if the packet had held bulbs, Boxtel knew his neighbour well enough to feel sure he would that moment have examined them lovingly, to judge the value of the gift.

So far from doing anything of the kind, Cornelius had reverentially received the packet from his godfather's hands, and had as reverentially placed it in a drawer, pushing it well back, no doubt in order, firstly, that it should not be seen, and secondly, that it should not occupy too much of the room intended for bulbs.

The packet safely deposited in the drawer, Cornelius de Witt rose from his chair, pressed his godson's hands, and made his way to the door. Cornelius quickly seized the candle and hastened forward to lead the way and give the

necessary light. Then the illumination of the studio was slowly extinguished, only to reappear on the staircase, then in the hall, and at last in the street, which was still crowded with people who wished to see the great man mount into his coach again.

Envy had guided Boxtel aright in his suspicions. The papers entrusted by De Witt to his godson and carefully locked up by him were the letters which had passed between John de Witt and the Marquis de Louvois.

But, as Cornelius had told his brother, he, De Witt, had religiously refrained from even hinting to his godson, Van Baerle, the political importance of the charge. His only warning was that the packet must never be given up to any one but himself, at his own express wish, come to claim it who might. And Cornelius, as we have seen, had put away the portfolio in the cabinet that held his most precious bulbs.

Then De Witt drove off, and the noise and the lights vanished. Cornelius van Baerle did not give another thought to the packet, but Boxtel by no means let it escape his memory. Like an experienced pilot, he saw on the horizon an almost invisible cloud which would grow bigger and bigger as it drew nearer, for it held a hurricane within its bosom.

The landmarks of our story are now set in the rich soil that stretches from Dordrecht to The Hague. Who will may follow them in the succeeding chapters. We for our part have proved that neither Cornelius nor John de Witt ever had in all Holland an enemy more relentless than had Van Baerle in his neighbour, Mynheer Isaac Boxtel.

Happy in his ignorance of this animosity, the tulip fancier approached daily closer to the prize offered by the Horticultural Society of Haarlem. He had advanced from a dark brown tulip to one of a burnt-coffee colour. And on the same day on which the hideous tragedy we have related occurred at The Hague he was to be found shortly before one o'clock in the afternoon lifting from his border the seedling-bulbs of burnt-coffee-coloured tulips. The forced flowering of these bulbs was timed for the

spring of 1673, and they could not fail to give the great black tulip demanded by the Haarlem Society.

At one o'clock in the afternoon, therefore, of the 20th of August, 1672, Cornelius van Baerle was in his drying-room, his feet on the cross-bar of his table, his elbows on the table-cloth, contemplating with ecstatic satisfaction three seedling-bulbs which he had just separated from the parent-bulb. They were perfectly healthy, and without a flaw, and were invaluable specimens of one of the most astounding productions of science and nature, the success of which should bring immortal fame to Cornelius van Baerle.

"I shall find the impossible black tulip," Cornelius said to himself, as he divided the bulbs. "I shall win the hundred-thousand-guilders' prize. I shall distribute them amongst the poor of Dordrecht in such a manner that the hatred aroused in civil wars against the rich will be appeased; and, fearing nothing from Republicans or Orangists, I shall be able to keep my flower-borders always perfectly beautiful. I shall no longer dread a riot, lest the Dordrecht shopkeepers and sailors from the harbour should come and root up my bulbs to feed their families, as they threaten to do sometimes when they hear I have given two or three hundred guilders for a bulb. It is decided, then, that I shall divide the hundred-thousand guilders prize of Haarlem amongst the poor. But——"

At this "but" Cornelius paused and sighed.

"But," he continued, "it would have been a delightful way of spending the hundred thousand guilders in enlarging my tulip-bed, or even in a voyage to the East, the country of beautiful flowers."

Alas! it was foolish to dwell on that, when muskets, flags, drums, and proclamations were the order of the day!

Van Baerle lifted his eyes to heaven and groaned aloud.

Then his gaze was once more fixed on his bulbs, which were infinitely above muskets, drums, flags, and pro-

clamations to his idea, and the only things that need trouble an honest man's soul.

"There they are, the beautiful bulbs," he said; "how glossy they are, how finely shaped, and what a sombre air they have, auguring ebony black to my tulips! The naked eye cannot so much as discern the veins on their skin. Oh! assuredly not a speck will destroy the black-robed flower I shall have brought into being!

"How shall I name this daughter of my vigils, of my labour, of my intellect? *Tulipa nigra Barlæensis*. Yes *Barlæensis* is a beautiful name. All the tulip-fanciers of Europe, that is to say all the people of any intelligence in Europe, will thrill with delight when the rumour spreads to the four quarters of the globe: THE GREAT BLACK TULIP IS FOUND! Fanciers will ask, 'What is its name?' '*Tulupa nigra Barlæensis*.' 'Why Barlæensis?' 'Because its creator is Van Baerle,' they will reply. 'And who is this Van Baerle?' 'The same man who has already produced five new kinds: the *Jeanne*, the *John de Witt*, the *Cornelius*, and others.' Such is my ambition. It will cost no tears to any one. And the world will talk of the *Tulipa nigra Barlæensis* when perhaps my godfather, the renowned politician, is no longer known except by the tulips to which I have given his name.

"Oh, my dear, dear bulbs! . . .

"When my tulip has blossomed," went on Cornelius "if peace is once more established in Holland, I will give only fifty thousand guilders to the poor; after all, that is plenty for a man who is not indebted to them for any thing. Then with the other fifty thousand guilders will make experiments. With those fifty thousand guilders I will succeed in scenting the tulip. Oh, if I could only give the scent of the rose or carnation, or what would be still better, an entirely new scent to the tulip. Or if I could restore to this queen of flowers her own natural inherent scent, which she has lost in passing from her Oriental to her Western throne, and which she must possess in the Indian Peninsula, at Goa, Bombay, and

Madras, and especially in that island which we are told was of yore the earthly paradise—Ceylon. That were glory indeed ! Then, then I would rather be Cornelius van Baerle than Alexander, Cæsar, or Maximilian.

“ Oh, my darling, darling bulbs ! ”

And Cornelius revelled in their beauty, and was rapt in the sweetest dreams.

When suddenly his bell was rung with far greater violence than was customary, Cornelius started and stretched his hands out over his bulbs, then, turning round, he asked :

“ Who is there ? ”

“ A messenger, Sir, from The Hague,” answered the servant.

“ A messenger from The Hague ! . . . what does he want ? ”

“ It is Craeke, Sir.”

“ Craeke ! Mynheer John de Witt’s confidential servant ? Very well, let him wait.”

“ I cannot wait,” said a voice in the passage.

And Craeke then and there pushed his way into the drying-room.

This extraordinary, almost outrageous, manner of appearing was so opposed to all rules of the house that Cornelius, on Craeke’s flinging himself into the drying-room, made a convulsive jerk with the hand covering the bulbs, which sent two of these priceless treasures rolling away—one under a smaller table that was standing close by, and the other into the fireplace.

“ Deuce take you ! ” cried Cornelius, falling on his knees to recover his bulbs ; “ whatever is the matter, Craeke ? ”

“ This, Sir,” said Craeke, laying a paper on the large table where the third bulb was still lying ; “ you must read this paper without a moment’s delay.”

And Craeke, who thought he had noticed in the Dordrecht streets symptoms of a similar disturbance to what he had left at The Hague, turned and fled without so much as again looking round.

"Very well, very well, my dear Craeke!" said Cornelius, extending his arm under the table in pursuit of the precious bulb; "I will read your paper."

Then, picking up the bulb, he held it in the hollow of his hand to examine it.

"Good!" he said; "here is one all right. That devil of a Craeke, to dash into my room in such a fashion! Now let us look for the other."

Without parting with the bulb he held, Van Baerle approached the fireplace, fell on his knees and with the end of his finger felt about among the cinders, which were fortunately cold.

Almost instantly he touched the second bulb.

"Excellent," he said, "here it is." And, scrutinising it with almost fatherly affection, he added, "Not hurt at all; just like the first!"

That very moment, and while he was still on his knees examining the second bulb, the drying-room door was shaken so violently, and then so rudely thrown open, that Cornelius felt the heat of blind fury rush to his cheeks and ears.

"What is it now?" he asked. "Is everybody in the house going mad?"

"Sir, Sir!" cried a servant, rushing into the room with a face still whiter and more scared than even Craeke had worn.

"Well?" asked Cornelius, dreading some disaster was portended by this double disobedience of all rules.

"Oh, fly, fly instantly, Sir!" cried the servant.

"Fly! What for?"

"The house, Sir, is full of the States' Guards."

"What do they want?"

"They are asking for you."

"What for?"

"To arrest you."

"To arrest me? Why should they arrest me?"

"They have a magistrate with them, Sir."

"What in the world does it mean?" asked Van Baerle,

holding tight in his hand the two bulbs, and casting a bewildered glance towards the staircase.

"They are coming up! they are coming up!" cried the servant.

"Oh! my dear child, my revered master," cried the old nurse, appearing in her turn in the drying-room.

"Collect your gold and your jewels, and fly, fly!"

"But how am I to fly, nurse?" asked Van Baerle.

"Jump out of the window."

"'Tis twenty-five feet to the ground."

"You will fall on six feet of soft mould."

"Oh, but I should fall on my tulips."

"Bah! What of that? Jump, quick!"

Cornelius took the third bulb, and walked towards the window. He opened it, but at sight of the destruction he would work amongst his borders far more than at the prospect of the distance he would have to jump, he exclaimed, "Never, never!" And he moved back.

Then they saw the halberds of the soldiers appearing above the balustrade of the staircase.

The old nurse raised her arms to heaven.

As to Cornelius van Baerle, it must be said in praise of the tulip-fancier, if not of the man, that his one thought was for his invaluable bulbs.

He looked for some paper in which to wrap them up, and, seeing the leaf of the Bible which Craeke had laid on the table, he took it without remembering—so great was his distraction—how it had come there. Then he carefully folded the three bulbs in it, concealed them in his breast, and stood waiting.

The soldiers, with the magistrate at their head, entered the next moment.

"Are you Doctor Cornelius van Baerle?" asked the magistrate, though he was intimately acquainted with the young man; but it was necessary he should adhere to the legal etiquette in order to give dignity to the arrest.

"I am, Mynheer van Spennen," replied Cornelius, bowing gravely to the magistrate; "and you know it."

"Then deliver up the seditious papers which are hidden in your house."

"Seditious papers?" Cornelius repeated, astounded and abashed at the charge.

"Oh, do not pretend to be astonished."

"I swear to you, Mynheer van Spennen," Cornelius continued, "that I am entirely ignorant of what you mean."

"Then I must make you understand, Doctor," said the judge. "Give up the papers which the traitor Cornelius de Witt left with you last January."

A ray of light flashed into Cornelius's mind.

"Oh, ho!" said Van Spennen: "so you are beginning to remember, are you, at last?"

"Certainly; but you spoke of seditious papers, and I have no paper of that kind."

"Ah, you deny it?"

"Emphatically."

The magistrate turned himself round, taking in with a glance everything that was in the room.

"Which is the apartment in your house called the drying-room?" he asked.

"The very room we are in, Mynheer van Spennen."

The magistrate looked for a moment at a little paper of memoranda on the top of his other papers.

"Very well," he said, like a man who has made up his mind. Then, turning again towards Cornelius, "Will you give me up those papers?" he said.

"But I cannot, Mynheer van Spennen. Those papers do not belong to me: they were handed over in trust to me, and a trust is sacred."

"Doctor Cornelius," said the judge. "in the name of the States I order you to open this drawer, and to give me up the papers which are deposited in it."

And the magistrate's finger pointed to the third drawer of a chest placed near the fireplace.

The papers made over by the Intendant of Dykes to his godson were in truth in this third drawer, a proof that the police had been correctly instructed.

"Ah, you will not?" said Van Spennen, seeing that Cornelius remained motionless with stupefaction. "Then I will open it myself."

And pulling out the drawer to its full extent, the magistrate discovered about twenty bulbs, arranged and labelled with care; then the packet of paper, which had remained in exactly the same condition as when it had been given into the care of his godson by the unfortunate Cornelius de Witt.

The magistrate broke the seals, tore open the envelope, cast a keen look over the first sheets that were exposed to view, and cried out in a terrible voice:

"So, then, justice has not been deceived!"

"What do you mean?" asked Cornelius. "What is it all about?"

"Oh, no more pretence of ignorance, Mynheer van Baerle," replied the magistrate. "Follow us."

"What! Why should I follow you?" cried the Doctor.

"Because, in the name of the States, I arrest you."

People were not yet arrested in the name of William of Orange. He had not been Stadtholder long enough for that.

"Arrest me?" cried Cornelius. "But what have I done?"

"That is no business of mine, Doctor; you will explain everything to your judges."

"Where?"

"At The Hague."

Cornelius, dumbfounded, embraced his old nurse, who fainted, and gave his hand to his servants, who burst into tears. Then he followed the magistrate, and was placed in a coach as a State prisoner, and driven full gallop to The Hague.

CHAPTER VIII

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

ALL that had happened, as may easily be guessed, was the diabolical work of Mynheer Isaac Boxtel.

By the help of his telescope he had not lost a single incident of the interview between Cornelius de Witt and his godson.

It may be remembered he had heard nothing, but had seen everything. Moreover, he had rightly surmised the importance of the papers confided by Cornelius de Witt to his godson, as he watched him carefully put away the packet in the drawer where he kept his most valuable bulbs.

Therefore, when Boxtel, who followed political events with far more attention than his neighbour Cornelius, knew that Cornelius de Witt was arrested as guilty of high treason to the States, he said to himself that he had only to utter the word, and his godson would be arrested just as his godfather had been.

Triumphant though Boxtel was, still he shrank from the idea of denouncing a man, when the accusation would probably lead him to the scaffold. But evil thoughts have this fatal peculiarity attached to them ; little by little the mind grows accustomed to them. Moreover, Mynheer Isaac Boxtel encouraged himself with this sophism : " Cornelius de Witt is a bad citizen, because he is accused of high treason and is arrested. I am a good citizen, because I am accused of nothing, and am as free as the air. But if Cornelius de Witt is a bad citizen, which is beyond dispute, because he is accused of high treason

and arrested, his accomplice, Cornelius van Baerle, must be as bad a citizen as himself. Therefore, as I am a good citizen, and it is the duty of good citizens to denounce bad citizens, it is my duty, Isaac Boxtel's duty, to denounce Cornelius van Baerle."

But, however specious this reasoning was, it would not perhaps have mastered Boxtel, and perhaps he would not have abandoned himself to the simple longing for revenge which was eating out his heart, if the demon of cupidity had not risen up to join cause with the demon of envy. Boxtel was fully informed as to the point Van Baerle had reached in his search for the great black tulip.

Modest though Doctor Cornelius was, he had not been able to conceal from his intimate friends his confidence of gaining in 1673 the prize of a hundred thousand guilders promised by the Horticultural Society of Haarlem.

Now Cornelius Van Baerle's confidence was at the root of the fever devouring Isaac Boxtel.

If Cornelius were arrested, it would cause an upheaval in his household. On the night following his arrest no one would dream of watching over the tulips in the garden.

And that night Boxtel would climb over the wall ; and as he knew where the bulb which was to produce the grand tulip was, he could easily steal it. Instead of its blooming in Cornelius's house, it would bloom in his, and he, Boxtel, would carry off the prize of a hundred thousand guilders instead of Cornelius. Then conceive the gratification of his ambition in calling the new flower *Tulupa nigra Boxtellensis* ! So his lust for wealth would be satisfied at the same time as his desire for revenge.

Awake, his one and only thought was the great black tulip ; asleep, his dreams were of nothing else.

Then came the 19th of August. About two o'clock in the afternoon Mynheer Isaac was unable to resist the powerful temptation any longer. He drew up an anonymous indictment which, if not authentic, was at any rate precise, and posted the denunciation.

Never into the jaws of the Venetian lions of bronze

glided a reptile paper that brought swifter and more alarming results.

The very same evening the first magistrate received the despatch he convoked a meeting of his colleagues for the following morning. Therefore they met the next day, decided on the arrest, and, as soon as the order was issued, had charged Van Spennen with the carrying of it into effect.

He performed his duty, as we know, with the dignity of a Hollander, and had arrested Cornelius van Baerle at the exact moment when the Orangists of The Hague were roasting fragments of the corpses of Cornelius and John de Witt.

Whether shame or lack of courage to fit his crime restrained him, we cannot decide, but Isaac Boxtel did not level his telescope that day on either garden, studio, or drying-room.

He knew only too well what was going to happen in poor Doctor Cornelius's house. He did not even get up from his bed when his only servant—who envied Van Baerle's servants with the same intensity of malice Boxtel bore to their master—entered his room.

"I shall not get up to-day," he said. "I am ill."

Towards nine o'clock he heard a great disturbance in the street, and quaked at the sound. His face turned whiter and ghastlier than a sick man's, and he shook as if in an ague fit.

His servant came into the room, whereupon Boxtel hid himself under his coverlet.

"Oh, Sir!" cried the man, not without a suspicion that in lamenting the misfortune which had happened to Van Baerle he was announcing good news to his master—"Oh, Sir, you cannot imagine what is going on!"

"How should I know what is going on?" replied Boxtel, in an almost inaudible voice.

"Well, well, Mynheer Boxtel, they are arresting your neighbour, Cornelius van Baerle, on a charge of high treason."

"Impossible!" muttered Boxtel, in a feeble voice.

"They say so, anyway. And I saw with my own eyes Judge van Spennen go into the house with the Archers."

"Oh, if you have seen it, that's quite a different matter."

"But, in any case, I will go and get fresh information," said the man; "and you can keep quiet, Sir, for I will come and tell you everything."

Boxtel, with no more than a nod, signified approval. The servant went out, and came in again a quarter of an hour afterwards.

"Everything I told you, Sir, was quite true."

"How so?"

"Mynheer van Baerle is arrested; he was put into a carriage and hurried off to The Hague."

"To The Hague?"

"Yes; and if all they say is true, things will go badly with him."

"What do they say?" asked Boxtel.

"They say, Sir—but it doesn't seem quite certain—that the Burghers must even now be in the very act of killing Mynheers Cornelius and John de Witt."

"Ah!" groaned Boxtel, with something very like a rattling in his throat, shutting his eyes as though to avoid seeing a lurid picture that was held before him.

"My master must be atrociously ill, as he didn't leap from his bed at the news!" said the servant to himself on leaving the room.

Isaac Boxtel was, indeed, very sick—sick as a man must be who has just killed a fellow-creature.

But he had murdered this man with a double purpose; the first was accomplished, but not yet the second.

Night came—the night Boxtel had waited for. When it was dark, he got up. Then he climbed the sycamore. He had reasoned rightly. No one was looking after the garden; every one and everything was in dire confusion. He listened till the clocks struck, one after the other, ten, eleven, twelve.

At midnight, his heart thumping, his hands trembling, his face livid, he came down from the tree, and taking a

ladder set it against the wall ; then he ran up to the last step and listened.

Everything was quiet. The silence of the night was unbroken by a sound.

The light of one single watcher burned in the house. It was that of the old nurse. This silence and darkness gave Boxtel courage.

He crossed his leg over the wall, paused a moment on the top of it, then, convinced there was nothing to fear, he passed the ladder from his own garden into that of Cornelius's and climbed down it.

Then, knowing the exact spot where the seedling-bulbs of the future black tulip were growing in the earth, he ran in their direction, following, however, the path, so as to leave no trace of his steps, and having reached the spot he plunged his hands with tigerish joy into the soft soil.

He found nothing, and thought he must have made a mistake. Sweat broke out on his brow. He felt with his fingers in the earth on all sides—right, left, backwards and forwards ; he found nothing. Then he nearly went out of his mind, for at last it struck him that the earth had been freshly turned over that very morning.

True enough, while Boxtel was in his bed, Cornelius had gone down into his garden, had dug up the bulb and, as we said before, had separated the three young seedling bulbs from it. Boxtel could not tear himself from the place. He had turned over ten square feet of earth with his hands. At last, he had no longer any doubt of his crushing ill-luck. Mad with rage he returned to his ladder, climbed over the wall, and removed the ladder from Cornelius's garden back to his own, flung it down, and jumped after it.

Then suddenly a last hope seized him. Perhaps the bulbs were in the drying-room. It was only necessary to get into the drying-room, as he had done in the case of the garden. There he would be sure to find them. After all, it was not much more difficult. The windows of the drying-room could be lifted up like those of a conservatory.

Cornelius van Baerle had himself opened them that morning, and nobody had remembered to shut them.

All that was needful was to procure a ladder long enough—a ladder twenty feet long, instead of twelve. Boxtel had noticed in the road in which he lived a house that was being repaired; against this house was set a very high ladder. This one would do Boxtel's business nicely, if the workmen had not taken it away. He ran to the house; the ladder was still there.

Boxtel took it and carried it with great difficulty into his garden; with yet more difficulties he set it up against the wall of Cornelius's house. It only just reached the casement-window.

Boxtel had put a dark lantern ready lit into his pocket, he climbed the ladder and entered the drying-room. Once in this sacred chamber he stopped still, leaning against the table. His legs shook under him, and his heart beat as though it would suffocate him.

There it was infinitely worse than in the garden. It would seem as though the open air robbed ownership of some of its legal sanctity, and the man who is ready enough to leap over a hedge or scale a wall will hesitate at the door or window of a room. In the garden Boxtel was only a trespasser, in the room he was a thief. All the same, he again took courage; he had not come so far to return home with empty hands.

But in vain he hunted high and low, opened and shut all the drawers, even the particular drawer where had been hid the packet so fatal to Cornelius. He found the *Jeanne*, the *Cornelius de Witt* in numbers, the dark-brown tulip, and the burnt-coffee tulip—labelled as in a botanical garden. But of the black tulip, or rather of the young bulbs in which it still slept and lay concealed as in a floral limbo—not one vestige!

But in the register of seeds and bulbs kept in double entry by Van Baerle with greater care and precision than the business books of the first houses of Amsterdam, Boxtel read these lines:

“To-day, the 20th of August, 1672, lifted from the

ground the great black tulip bulb, and subdivided the same into three perfect seedlings."

"Those seedlings! those seedlings!" groaned Boxtel, ransacking the drying-room; "where has he hidden them? Wretched man that I am!" he cried, striking his head in his rage, "fooled! fooled! fooled! What grower would be separated from his bulbs? What fancier, going to The Hague, would leave them behind at Dordrecht? What amateur could live without his bulbs? ay! and those, bulbs of the great black tulip! He would have had time to take them, the scoundrel! He has them on him! he has carried them off to The Hague!"

As by a flash of lightning, Boxtel saw before him the abyss of a useless crime. Crushed by the bitter disappointment, he fell forward on the same table, and at the same place where, but a few hours before, the unhappy Baerle had lingered admiring with so much pleasure the black-tulip bulbs.

"Well, well, after all!" said the envious Boxtel, lifting up his evil face, "if he has them, he can only keep them so long as he is alive, and——"

The rest of his vile thought was expressed by a hideous smile.

"The bulbs are at The Hague," he said, "so I cannot live any longer at Dordrecht. I must away to The Hague for the bulbs! Away to The Hague!"

And Boxtel, without paying any heed to the treasures he was leaving, so greatly was he absorbed by another of priceless worth, quitted the house by the window-casements, slid down the ladder, and carrying the latter back to the place from which he had taken it, returned to his own house, grumbling and growling to himself like some beast of prey.

CHAPTER IX

THE FAMILY CELL

IT was about midnight when poor Van Baerle's name was registered in the gaol-book of the Buytenhof.

What Rosa had foreseen had happened. The wrath of the people on finding Cornelius de Witt's cell empty was unbounded, and if Gryphus had been discovered by the infuriated mob, his own life would certainly have paid for that of the prisoner.

But this rage had freely glutted itself on the two brothers, who had been overtaken by their murderers, thanks to the precautions William had taken that the town-gates should be closed.

But there was a short respite when the prison was empty, and silence had succeeded the appalling thunder of execrations rolling round the stone stairs.

Rosa had seized the opportunity to escape from her hiding-place, and had persuaded her father to do likewise. The prison was altogether deserted ; what was the use of idling in the prison when murder was on at the Tol-Hek ?

Trembling from head to foot Gryphus ventured out after courageous Rosa. They went to close as best they could the great door, which was burst in half. It was plain a torrent of demoniacal fury had swept past the spot.

About four o'clock the tumult was heard returning, but it did not disturb Gryphus and his daughter. The noise was occasioned by the dragging back of the dead

bodies as the people took them to the usual place for executions.

This time Rosa hid herself again, but it was in order not to see the loathsome sight.

At midnight there came a knocking at the door of the Buytenhof, or rather at the barricade which had replaced it. His guards were bringing in Cornelius van Baerle.

When Gryphus received his new guest, and had read the letter stating the prisoner's rank, he muttered with the smile of a gaoler :

" Godson of Cornelius de Witt ; ah, then, we have the family cell vacant ; we can give you that."

And, chuckling over his own little joke, the savage Orangist took his cresset and his keys to conduct Cornelius to the cell which De Witt had only left that very morning, for the *exile*, which in times of revolution is explained by great philosophers in an axiom of high policy :

" Only the dead never return."

So Gryphus led Cornelius to his godfather's cell. On the way to this cell the unhappy prisoner heard nothing but the barking of a dog, and saw nothing but the face of a girl.

The dog bounded out of a kennel excavated in the wall, shaking his great chain, and sniffed at Cornelius so as to recognise him when he should be told to tear him to pieces. The girl, as the prisoner made the balustrade creak under the weight of his hand, half opened the wicket of her room, which was constructed in the thickness of the staircase wall. The lamp in her right hand lit up her pretty rosy face, framed in a mass of lovely golden hair, while with her left hand she drew across her bosom the white garment she wore for the night, for the unexpected arrival of Cornelius had roused her from her first sleep.

The whole would have made a fine picture for the brush of Rembrandt ; the black, spiral staircase, illuminated by the flare of the cresset, which revealed at the same time the sombre face of the gaoler, the melancholy form of Cornelius leaning over the balustrade, and beneath him

the sweet pensive face of Rosa framed by her door which caught the play of light from her lamp—her gesture too, as Cornelius, looking down from the steps above, almost unconsciously let his eyes rest for a moment on the girl's white and rounded shoulders.

And, lower still in the more complete darkness, where details were lost in the obscurity of night, the great massiff's eyes gleaming like carbuncles, while the rings of his chain shone in the reflected light of Rosa's lamp and the gaoler's cresset.

But the great painter could never have adequately rendered the expression of sorrow in Rosa's face on seeing this handsome young man with the drawn face slowly ascending the stairway, as she understood her father's ominous words, "You shall have the family cell."

The scene vanished in less time than we have taken to picture it. Gryphus passed on, Cornelius had to follow, and, five minutes after, he entered the cell. This it is needless to describe, since the reader knows it already.

Gryphus pointed out to the prisoner the bed on which the martyr—who that same day had yielded his soul to God—had suffered so much. Then the gaoler took his cresset and left the cell.

Alone, Cornelius threw himself on his bed but did not sleep. He kept his eyes fixed on the barred window overlooking the Buytenhof. Thus he saw, from behind the trees, the first white rays of light the sky lets fall on the earth like a white mantle.

Through the night horses had been galloping backwards and forwards before the Buytenhof, the heavy tramp of patrols had clanged on the pavement, and the matches of the arquebuses flaring in the west wind had flung intermittent shafts of light on the prison window-panes.

No sooner had the morning light begun to silver the house roofs than Cornelius, impatient to find out if there were any living creature near him, went to the window and cast a melancholy look round him.

At the extremity of the Square, a black mass, wrapped in a bluish haze from the morning fogs, was outlined

against the houses in a rugged silhouette. Cornelius recognised the gallows.

On the gallows were hanging two shapeless, torn trunks—little more indeed than skeletons—from which the blood still distilled in drops. The good people of The Hague had slashed the flesh off their victims, but had dutifully carried what remained of the bodies to the gibbet as an excuse for a double inscription on a huge placard.

There Cornelius, with the eyes of a young fellow of twenty-eight, read the following lines traced by the thick brush of some dauber of sign-boards :

“ Here hang that great scoundrel John de Witt and his brother, the little knave Cornelius de Witt ; both enemies of the people, but bosom friends of the King of France.”

Cornelius gave a great cry of dismay, and in a frenzy of horror kicked and struck the door so violently and persistently that Gryphus, infuriated, came rushing along with his great bunch of keys.

With horrible imprecations on the prisoner for disturbing him at an unseemly hour, he flung open the door.

“ What now ! is he mad, this other De Witt ? ” he cried. “ All these De Witts are possessed of the devil ! ”

“ See, see ! ” cried Cornelius, seizing the gaoler by his arm and dragging him towards the window ; “ what do I read down there ? ”

“ Down there ? ”

“ On that placard.”

Trembling, pale and breathless, he pointed out, at the extremity of the Square, the gallows surmounted by the cynical inscription just quoted.

Gryphus began to laugh.

“ Ha ! Ha ! So you have read it. . . . Well ! my good Sir, that’s what happens them, when folks have a secret correspondence with the enemies of his Highness, the Prince of Orange.”

“ The brothers De Witt have been murdered ! ” groaned Cornelius. The sweat broke out on his brow, and he let

himself fall on his bed, his arms hanging down and his eyes closed.

"The brothers De Witt have undergone the justice of the people," said Gryphus. "Do you call that being murdered? I should say they have been executed."

Then, seeing that the prisoner had not only quieted down, but had actually fainted, he left the cell, violently banging to the door after him and noisily drawing the bolts.

When he came to himself again, Cornelius found himself alone and recognised "the family cell," as Gryphus had called it, and knew it was indeed a fatal passage-way leading to a sad and shameful death.

Then, as he was a philosopher, and, moreover, a Christian, he began to pray for his godfather's soul, then for that of the Grand Pensionary, and in a little while he resigned himself to any suffering it might please God to send him.

When his thoughts had descended again from the things of heaven to those of earth, and he found himself once more in his cell and was satisfied he was alone in it, he drew from his breast the three bulbs of the black tulip and hid them in the darkest corner of the cell, behind a stone block, on which rested the traditional curse of the water.

Alas for the fruitless labour of so many years, and the destruction of so many exquisite dreams! So his discovery was to end in nothing, as his own life was to end in death! In this prison—no blade of grass, not an atom of soil, not one beam of sunlight! Cornelius fell into black despair at the thought, from which he was only lifted by a strange and unexpected occurrence. What this was, we must reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER X

THE GAOLER'S DAUGHTER

THAT evening, when he was bringing the prisoner's allowance of food, Gryphus, in opening the prison door, slipped on the damp stone flags, and fell on his hand in trying to recover his footing. But as his hand was twisted, he broke his arm above the wrist.

Cornelius stepped quickly towards the gaoler, but Gryphus, unaware of the serious nature of the accident, called out :

“ Don't move, don't move ; it's nothing ! ”

He tried to rise by leaning on his arm but, as the bone gave way, the pain forced him to utter a sharp cry. Then he realised that his arm was broken, and this man, who was brutality itself to others, fainted on the threshold, where he lay immovable and cold as if he were dead.

All this time the prison door had remained open, and Cornelius was free to go where he would. But the idea of taking advantage of the accident never so much as came into his head ; he had recognised, by the way the arm had doubled up, and the sound it made, that it was fractured, and he knew the man must be in great pain. He thought, then, of nothing except to try and help the sufferer, hard-hearted though that sufferer had seemed to be towards him in their short acquaintance.

At the noise Gryphus had made in falling, and at his cry of pain, a quick step was heard on the staircase. A vision of beauty followed on the sound of the step, and Cornelius's exclamation at sight of her was echoed by a young girl, who, seeing her father stretched on the

round and the prisoner bending over him, at first supposed that Gryphus—whose cruelty she knew only too well—had fallen after a struggle between him and the prisoner.

The girl was the beautiful Frisian.

Cornelius knew directly what was passing in her mind. But the first glance showed her what had happened, and, ashamed of what she had thought, she raised her beautiful eyes, moist with tears, to his face, and said :

“ Pray forgive me, and let me thank you, Sir. Forgive me for what I thought, and thank you for what you are doing.”

Cornelius blushed. “ I am only doing my duty as a Christian,” he said, “ in helping a fellow-creature.”

“ Yes, but when you help my father this evening, you forget the insults he heaped upon you this morning. Sir, your Christianity is greater even than your humanity.”

Cornelius lifted his eyes to the beautiful girl, astonished at hearing such generous and tender words from daughter of the people.

But he had no time to express his surprise, for Gryphus, recovering from his fainting fit, opened his eyes, and his habitual brutality returning with consciousness he said :

“ So, that's what you do, is it ? I hurry up to bring prisoner his supper and, in my hurry, fall and break my arm, and you leave me lying on the stones ! ”

“ Hush, father, you are not just to this young gentleman, whom I found trying to help you.”

“ He help me ? ” said Gryphus, incredulously.

“ It's quite true, my man ; and I will still do all I can to help you.”

“ You ? are you a doctor, then ? ”

“ I was once,” said Cornelius.

“ Do you mean to say that you could set my arm ? ”

“ Certainly I could.”

“ And what would you do it with, eh ? ”

“ Two staves of wood and some linen bandages.”

“ You hear, Rosa ? ” said Gryphus ; “ the prisoner will

set my arm again. That's so much saved, you understand. Come, help me get up. I feel as heavy as lead."

Rosa gave the wounded man her shoulder, and he put his uninjured arm round her neck; then with an effort he rose to his feet. Cornelius, meanwhile, so that he should not walk further than necessary, brought him a chair.

Gryphus sat on the chair; then turning towards his daughter, he said:

"Well, didn't you hear? Go, bring what is wanted."

Rosa went down the staircase and returned in a minute or so with two staves from a cask and a long linen bandage.

Cornelius, in order not to waste time, had taken off the gaoler's coat and had tucked up his shirt-sleeves.

"Is that all you require, Sir?" asked Rosa.

"Yes," said Cornelius looking at the things she had brought, "yes, they will do capitally. Now, push up this table, while I support your father's arm."

Rosa pushed up the table. Cornelius laid the broken arm on it, so as to make it lie perfectly flat, and with much skill set the limb, adjusted the improvised splints and fastened the bandages.

As the last pin was put in, the gaoler fainted a second time.

"Go and bring some vinegar," said Cornelius; "we will bathe his brows, and he will recover."

But instead of carrying out these instructions, Rosa, after assuring herself that her father was really unconscious, approached Cornelius.

"Sir," she said, "let it be service for service."

"What do you mean, pretty one?" asked Cornelius.

"I mean, Sir, that the judge who will examine you to-morrow came to-day to make inquiries as to which cell you were in, and when he was told you were confined in Mynheer Cornelius de Witt's cell, he laughed in such a sinister fashion I cannot think it bodes you any good."

"But what can they do to me?"

"Look at that gallows."

"But I am not guilty," said Cornelius.

"Were *they* guilty, the men you see yonder, hanged, mutilated, dismembered?"

"That is true," said Cornelius, his face darkening.

"Besides," continued Rosa, "the people *wish* to find you guilty. But, guilty or not guilty, your trial begins to-morrow, the day after you will be condemned; things move swiftly just now."

"Well, and what do you conclude from all this, my dear?"

"Only that I am alone, that I am weak, that my father has fainted, that the dog is muzzled, so there is nothing to prevent your escaping. Save yourself, that's what I would say."

"What is it you say?"

"I tell you I was unable, alas! to save Mynheers Cornelius and John de Witt and that I would gladly save you. Only, you must be quick. My father's wits are returning; in a minute, perhaps, he will open his eyes and it will be too late. Do you hesitate?"

Cornelius, indeed, had remained motionless, looking at Rosa, but as if he saw her without hearing what she said.

"Don't you understand?" said the girl, impatiently.

"Oh yes, I understand," said Cornelius. "But——"

"But?"

"I refuse. They would accuse you."

"What does that matter?" asked Rosa, blushing.

"Thank you, child," answered Cornelius, "but I am going to stop here."

"You will stop here! My God! my God! Do you not understand, then, that you will be condemned . . . condemned to death, executed on the scaffold, perhaps murdered and torn to shreds as they murdered and tore in pieces Mynheers John and Cornelius! In God's name, don't think of me—but fly from this cell. Beware of it, it brings evil to a De Witt."

"What!" cried out the gaoler, starting up; "who talks of those knavish, wretched, rascally De Witts?"

"Don't excite yourself, my good fellow," said

Cornelius, with his sweet smile, "the worst thing in the world for fractures is to let your blood get heated."

Then he added softly to Rosa :

"Child, I am innocent, I await my judges with the calm and confidence of an innocent man."

"Hush," said Rosa.

"Why, hush ? "

"My father mustn't suspect that we have been talking together."

"What would be the harm ? "

"The harm ?—he would prevent my ever coming here again," said the girl.

Cornelius received this ingenuous confidence with a smile ; it seemed to him that a ray of happiness was glistening on his adversity.

"How now ! What are you chattering about there together ? " said Gryphus, rising and supporting his right arm with his left.

"Nothing," answered Rosa ; "the doctor is advising me as to your diet."

"My diet ! my diet ! you must be dieted too, my girl ! "

"How, father ? "

"You must never enter the prisoners' cells, or if you go into them, you must come out of them again as soon as possible. Off, then, before me and briskly too ! "

Rosa and Cornelius glanced at each other. Rosa's glance seemed to say, "You see now ! " And that Cornelius answered, "The Lord's will be done ! "

CHAPTER XI

VAN BAERLE'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

ROSA was not mistaken. On the morrow the judges came to the Buytenhof, and interrogated Cornelius van Baerle. The examination was not long. It was proved that Cornelius had kept the fatal correspondence of the De Witts with France in his own house.

He never denied it. The only doubt in the minds of the judges was as to whether this correspondence had been placed in his charge by his godfather Cornelius de Witt. But since, now the two martyrs were dead, Cornelius van Baerle need no longer keep their secret, he not only gave no denial to the fact that the papers had been entrusted to him by Cornelius in person, but related how, and in what manner and circumstances they had been confided to him.

This confession implicated the godson in the godfather's crime. There was clear complicity between De Witt and Van Baerle. Neither did Cornelius confine himself to this avowal : he made no concealment of his sympathies, his habits and his intimacies. He spoke of his lack of any interest in politics, and declared his love of study, art, science and flowers. He affirmed that, since the day Cornelius had come to Dordrecht, and handed over the papers to him, he—Van Baerle—had never touched, or even looked at them.

His judges declared that it was scarcely possible he could be speaking the truth on this point, for the papers were put away in a chest that must have lain open to his hands and eyes daily.

Cornelius answered, that was true enough, but his hands were only thrust into the drawer to satisfy himself that the bulbs were quite dry, and that he only looked into it to find out if they were beginning to shoot.

His judges argued that this pretended ignorance as to the contents of the packet could not be rationally accepted, for it was impossible he should be unaware of the momentous nature of the letters.

Cornelius replied that his godfather had really loved him, and was too astute to enlighten him as to their importance, because such a knowledge could only disquiet the person in charge of them.

Again, it was objected that, had Mynheer de Witt acted in this manner, he would have inserted, in case of any accident, a certificate declaring his godson to be completely unacquainted with the subject-matter of the correspondence. Or at least, his godfather during his trial would have written him a letter he could produce as proof of his innocence.

Cornelius retorted that it could never have occurred to his godfather that the letters might be discovered, hidden as they were in a chest which was as sacred to all the household as was the Ark of the Covenant of old. Therefore a certificate would have seemed absurd. As to a letter, he remembered that just before his arrest, and when he was absorbed in the contemplation of the rarest bulb extant, Mynheer John de Witt's servant had rushed into his drying-room, and flung down a paper, but his remembrance of what had happened was now only like a vague dream; the servant had disappeared, with regard to the paper, perhaps it might be found if they looked for it.

As to Craeke, he could not be found, since he had left Holland.

As to the paper, it was so little likely to be found no one gave themselves the trouble of looking for it.

Cornelius, himself, did not insist on this point, because, supposing the paper was found, it could have no connection with the incriminating letters.

The judges were anxious to appear as though desirous Cornelius should make a stronger defence. They manifested the gentle patience shown by a magistrate who is interested in the accused, or a victor who has confounded his opponent, and, being absolutely sure of his conquest, has no need to bring about his absolute ruin.

Cornelius rejected this hypocritical protection, and, in a last rejoinder, spoken with all a martyr's courage, and the calm of an upright man, he said :

"Gentlemen, you ask me questions I cannot answer except with the exact truth. This is the exact truth. The packet came to me as I have told you. Before God I declare I did not know, nor do I even now know its contents. On the day of my arrest only, I learnt that this packet was the Grand Pensionary's correspondence with the Marquis de Louvois. Lastly, I protest I am ignorant how any one can have known these letters were in my house and more especially how I can be held guilty for having received what my illustrious and unfortunate godfather gave into my care."

That was all Van Baerle's defence. The judges retired to consider their verdict.

They held that every off-shoot of civil dissension is criminal, since it rekindles the strife which it is the interest of all to suppress.

One of the judges, a man who passed for a profound observer, stated that this apparently frank, simple young man was probably extremely dangerous, as he most likely concealed under his cloak of freezing apathy a burning desire to revenge his kinsfolk, the De Witts.

Another remarked that a passion for tulips is naturally allied to a love for politics, and that it is a historical fact that many dangerous and unscrupulous men have taken up gardening with as much enthusiasm as if it were their profession. Tarquin, for instance, who cultivated poppies at Gabii, and the great Condé, who watered his carnations in the Keep of Vincennes, and this just at the moment when the former was meditating his return to Rome, and the second his escape from prison.

The judge concluded his observations with this dilemma: "Either Mynheer Cornelius van Baerle has a passion for tulips, or a passion for politics. In either case he has told us a falsehood. By the letters which were found in his house, it is proved he was interested in politics: on the other hand, the bulbs are also there, and so it is proved he was interested in tulips. Hence the enormity of his crime. As Cornelius van Baerle devoted himself both to tulips and politics at one and the same time, the accused is of a hybrid temperament, an amphibious organisation, spending himself with equal zest in the cause of politics and tulips. This proves him to belong to a type that is most dangerous to the public welfare, and also proves the analogy of his character with those masterful minds exemplified of yore by Tarquin and M. de Condé."

The final drift of all these arguments was that his Highness, the Prince Stadtholder of Holland, would unquestionably be infinitely obliged to the magistracy of The Hague for simplifying for him the administration of the Seven Provinces—by stamping out of existence the least germ of conspiracy against his rule.

This argument outweighed all the others, and in order thoroughly to destroy every germ of conspiracy, sentence of death was pronounced unanimously against Mynheer Cornelius van Baerle, arraigned, and convicted, of having, under the innocent guise of a tulip-fancier, taken part in the detestable intrigues and abominable plots of the brothers De Witt against the Dutch nation and in their secret understanding with France.

A further clause was added to the effect that the aforesaid Cornelius van Baerle should be taken from the Buytenhof prison to the scaffold in the square of that name, where the public executioner would cut off his head.

As the deliberation was a serious matter, it lasted half an hour, and during this half-hour the prisoner had been remanded to his cell.

There the States' Recorder came to read the sentence to him.

Gryphus had been forced to keep his bed by the fever resulting from the fracture of his arm. His keys had been handed over to one of the assistant turnkeys, and, behind this assistant, who had ushered in the Recorder, was Rosa, the fair Frieslander. She took up a position by the corner of the door, with a handkerchief over her mouth to stifle her sighs and sobbing.

Cornelius heard the sentence with a face expressing astonishment rather than dejection.

The sentence read, the Recorder asked him if he had any answer to make to it.

"Heavens, no!" he replied. "I can only say that among the many causes of death a sensible man would take precaution to avoid, I should never have thought of the one named in the sentence."

The Recorder, at this answer, bowed to Cornelius van Baerle with all the deference functionaries of his class give to great criminals of every kind.

"By the by," Cornelius said to him as he was leaving the cell, "what day does the affair take place?"

"Why, to-day, of course," answered the Recorder, a little ruffled by the coolness of the condemned man.

There was the sound of a deep sob behind the door.

Cornelius leant forward to see who it was who had sobbed, but Rosa, expecting his movement, had started back out of sight.

"And what time," asked Cornelius, "is the execution?"

"Twelve o'clock, Sir."

"The deuce!" said Cornelius, "I think I heard ten o'clock strike about twenty minutes ago. I have no time to lose."

"To make your peace with God, Sir," said the Recorder, bowing to the ground; "and you can ask for any Minister of Religion you would prefer."

He went out backwards as he spoke, and the gaoler's assistant was about to follow him and to lock the door behind him, when a white and trembling arm came behind the man and the heavy door.

Cornelius saw nothing but a golden hood with ear

pieces of white lace, the pretty head-dress of the Friesland women. He only heard a murmur in the turnkey's ear ; but the man put his heavy keys into the white hand held out to him, and descending a few steps, he sat down in the middle of the staircase, which was thus guarded above by himself, and below by the dog. The golden hood turned round, and Cornelius recognised the fair Rosa, her face furrowed by grief and her great blue eyes swimming with tears.

The girl stepped towards Cornelius, her two hands pressed against her throbbing heart.

"Oh, Sir, Sir!" she said, and her voice broke.

"My pretty child," replied Cornelius, deeply moved. "What would you have me do? I warn you I have very little power now."

"Sir, I want to implore a favour of you," said Rosa, stretching out her hands partly towards Cornelius, partly towards heaven.

"Don't cry so, Rosa," said the prisoner; "for your tears distress me far more than my approaching death. And you must know the more innocent a prisoner is, the more he should die with calmness and even gladness, since he dies a martyr. Come, do not cry any more, and tell me your wish, my pretty Rosa."

The girl fell on her knees. "Forgive my father," she said.

"Your father!" Cornelius replied, astonished.

"Yes, he has been so cruel to you! but it is natural to him to be so; he is the same to all, and he has not singled you out for his brutality."

"He is punished, dear Rosa, more than punished by his accident, and I freely forgive him."

"Indeed, I thank you," said Rosa. "And now, tell me, I beg you, if there is anything I can do for you."

"You can dry your beautiful eyes, dear child," answered Cornelius, with a smile.

"But for yourself . . . for yourself?"

"A man who has only an hour to live is a great Sybarite, dear Rosa, if he still wants anything."

"The Minister they offered you?"

"I have loved God all my life, Rosa. I have loved Him in His works, and blessed Him in all that is His will. God knows that I have loved Him. Therefore I do not ask for a Minister. The last idea which absorbs me, Rosa, is really concerned with the glory of God. Help me, I beg you, in the carrying out of this last idea."

"Ah, Mynheer Cornelius, speak, speak!" cried the girl, through her tears.

"Give me your pretty hand, and promise me not to laugh, child."

"Laugh!" cried Rosa, in her despair; "laugh now! You have never even looked at me, then, Mynheer Cornelius."

"I have, Rosa, I have both with my bodily eyes and with those of my mind. Never was a fairer woman, never was a purer being, and if I do not look at you any more now, forgive me; it is because, as I am about to leave life, I wish to regret nothing in it."

Rosa trembled, for eleven o'clock struck from the belfry of the Buytenhof as the prisoner spoke. Cornelius understood what it was set her trembling.

"Yes, yes, we must be quick," he said, "you are right, Rosa."

Then, drawing the paper that was wrapped round the bulbs from his breast, where he had again hidden them, as he had no fear now of being searched:

"My good, pretty Rosa," he said, "I have been passionately fond of flowers. That was when I did not know a man could love anything else. Do not blush, do not turn away, Rosa, even if I were making you a declaration of love, poor child, it would end here and now. Down there in the Buytenhof Square is a certain thing of steel which in sixty minutes will bring me to reason for my rashness. Listen, Rosa, I loved flowers and I had found, at least I thought so, the secret of the wonderful black tulip which every one believed impossible, and for which, as you may know or may not know, there is a prize of a hundred thousand guilders offered by the

Horticultural Society of Haarlem. Those hundred thousand guilders—God knows it is not them I regret—are here in this paper. They are to be won by the three bulbs wrapped up in it and you can take them, Rosa, for I give them to you.”

“Oh, Mynheer Cornelius!”

“Oh yes, you can take them, Rosa, you are wronging no one in doing so, child. I am alone in the world: my father and mother are dead; I never had either sister or brother. It never occurred to me to love any one seriously, and if any one thought of loving me, I never knew it. Rosa, see how lonely I am, for now my death is close at hand, you only are in my dungeon, consoling me, supporting me.”

“But, Mynheer, the hundred thousand guilders.”

“Yes, we will talk seriously, dear child,” said Cornelius. “A hundred thousand guilders will make a fine marriage-portion to gild your beauty. These you shall have, then, dear Rosa; and all I ask of you in return is your promise to marry some worthy young fellow, young and handsome, whom you will love, and who will love you as much as I have loved flowers. Don’t interrupt me, Rosa, I have but a few minutes left.”

The poor girl was almost stifled with her sobs.

Cornelius took her hand. “Listen to me,” he said, “this is what you must do. You will get soil from my garden at Dordrecht. Ask Butruysheim, my gardener, for earth from my No. 6 border; then you must plant these three bulbs in it in a deep box. They will flower next May, that is to say, in seven months; and when you see the flower rising on its stem, shelter it carefully from the wind at night and from the sun by day. It will flower black, I am sure. Then you will inform the President of the Society at Haarlem. The Committee will pronounce their judgment on the colour of the flower and will award you the hundred thousand guilders.”

Rosa gave a deep sigh.

“Now,” continued Cornelius, wiping away a tear, which the thought of the wonderful black tulip he was

never to see, rather than of the life he was leaving, had caused to fall, "I have only one other wish. It is that the tulip shall be called *Rosa Barlaeensis*, that it may recall both your name and mine ; as you do not know Latin, and will very likely forget the word, try and find me a pencil and some paper and I will write it down for you."

Rosa gave vent to her sobs and handed him a book, bound in shagreen, and bearing the initials "C.W."

"What's this ?" asked the prisoner.

"Alas ! it is the Bible of your poor godfather, Cornelius de Witt. He gathered strength to undergo his torture from it, and to hear his sentence without blanching. I found it in this room after the martyr's death and have treasured it as a relic. I was bringing it you to-day, for I thought the book must hold within it some divine power. But, thank God, you were in no need of this strength, as He had already given it you. Write in it what you have to write, Mynheer Cornelius, and though, alas ! I cannot read, what you write shall be done."

Cornelius took the Bible and kissed it reverently.

"What shall I write with ?" he asked.

"There is a pencil in the Bible. It was there and I have kept it there."

It was the pencil John de Witt had lent his brother, and had forgotten to reclaim.

Cornelius took it, and, like his godfather, though about to die, he wrote with a steady hand on the second page—you will remember the first had been torn out:

"August 23, 1672. As, although innocent, I shall shortly on the scaffold yield my soul to God, I bequeath to Rosa Gryphus the only property that remains to me in this world, all my other goods having been confiscated. I bequeath to Rosa Gryphus three bulbs, which I am absolutely convinced will produce in May next the wonderful black tulip for which a prize of a hundred thousand guilders has been offered by the Society of Haarlem. It is my wish that she shall be

paid the hundred thousand guilders in my stead and as my sole heiress; with this one condition attached—that she shall marry a young man of about my own age, who will love her and whom she will love; and that the wonderful black tulip—which will create a new species—shall be called *Rosa Barlaeensis*, combining her name and mine.

“So may God grant me grace, and health to her!”

“CORNELIUS VAN BAERLE”

Then, giving the Bible to Rosa, he said:

“Read it.”

“Alas!” she answered, “I have told you already I cannot read.”

Then Cornelius read to Rosa his last testament. The poor child could not control her sobs.

“Do you accept my conditions?” he asked with a melancholy smile, and kissing the beautiful girl’s trembling finger-tips.

“I cannot, Sir,” she stammered.

“You cannot? and why not?”

“Because I could not keep one of these conditions.”

“Which? I thought I had drawn up our agreement just as you would like.”

“You give me these hundred thousand guilders as a marriage-portion?”

“Yes.”

“In order to marry a man I love?”

“Of course.”

“Well, Sir, this money can never belong to me. I shall never love any one, and shall never marry.”

These words Rosa had scarcely been able to articulate. The poor girl now sank to her knees in an almost fainting condition.

Cornelius, terrified at seeing her so pale and well-nigh lifeless, was about to lift her up in his arms when a heavy step, accompanied by other ominous sounds and the barking of the dog, was heard on the staircase.

"My God ! my God ! they are coming to take you !" cried Rosa, wringing her hands. "Have you nothing else to tell me, Sir ?" She flung her arms over her head in her anguish, and her whole body was convulsed with sobs.

"Only to treasure most carefully your three bulbs, and to follow scrupulously the rules I have laid down for you, as if you loved me, Rosa. Farewell."

"Oh yes," she said, without raising her head. "Oh yes, I will do everything you have told me. Except that I will never marry," she added, in a low tone, "for I swear to you that would be impossible."

And she hid Cornelius's treasure in her heaving bosom. The noise Cornelius and Rosa had heard was the approach of the Recorder and executioner, who had come for the condemned man. They were followed by the soldiers who were to form the guard round the scaffold, and by a curious crowd of frequenters of the prison.

Without one sign of shrinking from his fate, and equally without any bravado, Cornelius received the functionaries rather as friends than as persecutors, and let them proceed to the execution of their duty without opposition.

Then, with a glance through his small barred window at the Square, he saw the scaffold ; and, twenty steps from the scaffold, the gallows, from which the outraged corpses of the brothers De Witt had been removed by order of the Stadtholder.

When it was time to follow the Guards and descend the staircase, Cornelius looked round hoping to see the angelic face of Rosa, but all that met his eyes behind the swords and halberds was a prostrate form beside the wooden bench, and an ashen face half veiled by her long hair.

But in falling senseless to the ground, Rosa, in obedience to her friend, and even though in a state of oblivion, had pressed her hand against her velvet bodice, and still instinctively held tight Cornelius's precious gift.

As he left his cell, the young man saw in Rosa's

clenched fingers the yellowish leaf of Cornelius de Witt's Bible—the same leaf on which he had written with so much difficulty and pain the few lines that, had Cornelius van Baerle only read them, would have saved both a man and a tulip.

CHAPTER XII

ON THE SCAFFOLD

CORNELIUS had not three hundred steps to take from the prison before reaching the scaffold.

At the foot of the staircase the dog watched him go by without stirring. Indeed, Cornelius fancied he saw an expression of gentleness bordering on pity in the mastiff's eyes.

Perhaps the dog recognised the condemned and only attacked those who were released as free.

It is hardly necessary to say that the shorter the way from the prison door to the foot of the scaffold, the more it was thronged with curious spectators.

These were the same wretches who, their thirst for blood not having been sufficiently quenched three days previously, were now waiting in hopes of a fresh victim.

Cornelius had scarcely appeared before a terrific yell rang along the street, spread over the Square, and echoed down the different roads converging on the scaffold, all of which were thronged by eager crowds.

Thus the scaffold resembled an island breasting the tide of four or five rivers.

In the midst of threats, howls, denunciations—probably to avoid hearing them—Cornelius was lost in his own thoughts. Of what was this innocent man thinking as he stepped towards death? Neither of his enemies, nor his judges, nor his executioners. He thought of the beautiful tulips he would, perhaps, look down on from heaven, whether in Ceylon, or Bengal, or elsewhere. He thought also how perhaps, from amongst the just souls on the

right hand of God, he would be able to see pityingly this earth where John and Cornelius de Witt had been killed for devoting themselves to politics, and where Cornelius van Baerle was going to be killed for devoting himself to tulips.

"One stroke of the axe," thought the philosopher, "and all my beautiful dreams will become reality."

It remained to be proved, however, whether—as in the cases of M. de Chalais, M. de Thou, and other men who were clumsily executed—the executioner was not reserving more than one stroke, one martyrdom, for the poor tulip-fancier.

None the less resolutely did Van Baerle ascend the steps of the scaffold. Yes, though he had been the friend of the illustrious John, and godson of the noble Cornelius, whom the scoundrels now crowding to see him had torn to pieces and burnt but three days since, he bore himself proudly.

He knelt and prayed. And as he did so, he noticed with keen joy that, in laying his head on the block, by keeping his eyes open to the last moment, he would be able to see the barred window of the Buytenhof.

The time for making this last movement had come. Cornelius set his chin on the damp and cold block. But, in spite of himself, at that moment his eyes closed, to meet with greater fortitude the avalanche about to wipe out his life. A flash of light gleamed on the scaffold; the executioner had raised his sword.

Van Baerle bade adieu to the wonderful black tulip, feeling confident of awakening, through the goodness of God, in a brighter and more beautiful world.

Three times he felt the cold rush of air from the blade pass over his shuddering neck. But what marvel was this! He felt neither pain nor shock, and saw no change in the darkness of his closed eyes.

Then suddenly, without his knowing by whom, Van Baerle felt himself raised by gentle hands, and presently standing again on his feet, though staggering somewhat.

He opened his eyes. Some one close beside him was

reading something on a great parchment sealed with a large red seal.

And the same sun, yellow and pale as a Dutch sun generally is, shone in the sky, and the same barred window looked at him from high up on the Buytenhof's walls, and the same ruffianly crew gazed at him from the Square below, though they were no longer howling, but breathless with astonishment. By dint of opening his eyes, looking about him and listening, Van Baerle began to understand what had happened.

His Highness, William Prince of Orange, fearing no doubt lest the seventeen pounds of blood, almost to an ounce, which Van Baerle must have in his body should overflow the cup of Divine justice, had been moved to compassion in consideration of his character and the great probability of his innocence.

Therefore, his Highness had granted him his life. That was why the sword—the raising of which had caused the sinister flash of light—had whirled three times round his head like the funereal bird round that of Turnus, but had spared his life. That was why he had felt neither pain nor shock. That was why the sun still continued to laugh in the blue of our Northern heaven, which is of an indifferent quality certainly, but still decidedly preferable to the darkness of death.

Cornelius, who had looked forward to the celestial heights and the panorama of the tulip world to be thence enjoyed, was a little disappointed, but he consoled himself by a grateful sense of life in that part of the body the Greeks called *trachelos* and we call more briefly the neck.

Cornelius hoped the pardon was free and without restrictions, and that he would be allowed to return to his flower-borders at Dordrecht. But he was mistaken. As Madame de Sévigné phrased it, “there was a post-script to the letter,” and the most important part of the letter relating to Van Baerle was to be found in the post-script.

It was worded to the effect that William, Stadtholder

of Holland, condemned Cornelius van Baerle to imprisonment for life.

His guilt was not sufficient for death, but was too great for liberty.

Cornelius, on hearing the postscript, when his first wrath at its hypocrisy had subsided, thought to himself, "After all, I have not quite lost everything. Perpetual confinement has something good about it. Perpetual confinement means the presence of Rosa. And also my three black-tulip bulbs."

But Cornelius forgot that Seven Provinces can have seven prisons, one for each Province, and that a prisoner's keep is less dear elsewhere than at The Hague, the capital of the country.

His Highness William of Orange, who it seems could not afford to keep Van Baerle at The Hague, sent him to the fortress of Loewestein, near Dordrecht, but alas ! still distant. For Loewestein is situated at the point of the island formed by the Waal and the Meuse, and faces Gorcum.

Van Baerle was well enough acquainted with his country's history to know that, after the death of Barneveldt, the celebrated Grotius had been imprisoned in this castle, and that the States, in return for his services as a publicist, lawyer, historian, poet and theologian, had generously allowed him for his maintenance twenty-four stivers a day.

"I, who in comparison with Grotius am of no value," pondered Van Baerle, "will scarcely get twelve stivers, and shall have difficulty in keeping body and soul together. But keep them together I will."

Then a terrible remembrance was borne in upon him. "The country there is damp and cloudy ! The soil abominable for tulips ! And Rosa—Rosa will not be at Loewestein !" And his head, which he had only just escaped from losing altogether, fell on his breast in despair.

CHAPTER XIII

A DISAPPOINTED SPECTATOR

A COACH for the prisoner had driven up to the scaffold while he was absorbed in these gloomy reflections. He was told to get into it, and he obeyed.

His last look was for the Buytenhof. He hoped to see Rosa's sympathetic face, but the coach was drawn by excellent horses that quickly carried Van Baerle away from amidst the popular applause in honour of the Stadtholder's sublime magnanimity. Here and there, too, might be heard muttered curses against the brothers De Witt and the godson just rescued from death. Put into words, applause and discontent signified : It is lucky we brought to justice so swiftly as we did that monstrous criminal John and the little knave Cornelius—or his Highness in his mercy might have taken them out of our reach, as he has this Cornelius !

Among all the spectators Van Baerle's execution had attracted to the Buytenhof and who were somewhat disappointed at the turn of events, a certain neatly dressed burgher was particularly mortified. This man, since the morning, had used his feet and fists to such purpose that he had succeeded in only being separated from the scaffold by the line of soldiers on guard.

Many had shown themselves alert enough to see the guilty Van Baerle's *perfidious* blood flowing, but no one had exhibited such a malignant determination to accomplish doing so at all costs as this burgher.

Those who were the most venomous had come to the Buytenhof at dawn to make sure of the best place ;

he had passed the night itself on the prison threshold, so outrivalling them ; and from the prison he had reached the front line, *unquibus et rostro*, persuading some and compelling the others.

And when the executioner had led the condemned man up on to the scaffold, the burgher, who had mounted on the stone parapet of a fountain the better to see and to be seen, had made a sign to the headsman which the latter understood to mean :

“ You’ve not forgotten the bargain ! ”

And the man had replied with another sign, as much as to say :

“ I understand.”

Who, then, was this burgher who appeared on such good terms with the executioner, or what was the mystery of their mutual signs ?

The burgher was Mynheer Isaac Boxtel, who had come to The Hague since Van Baerle’s arrest to try and get possession of the three black-tulip bulbs.

In the first instance Boxtel had done his best to gain over Gryphus, but the gaoler had all the fidelity, suspiciousness and grip of the bull-dog. He had bristled, consequently with suspicion at Boxtel’s hatred, thinking he was a friend cloaking under his idle questions some means of escape for the prisoner.

So, at the first suggestions thrown out by Boxtell to Gryphus that he should purloin the bulbs which Cornelius van Baerle must have concealed, if not in his breast, then in some corner of his cell, Gryphus had replied by hurling Boxtel out of the prison and setting the mastiff at his heels.

Boxtel did not lose heart because of the piece of his trunk-hose left in the dog’s teeth. He returned to the charge ; but this time Gryphus with a broken arm was in his bed in a high fever. So Boxtel, not being allowed admittance to him, endeavoured to enlist the sympathies of Rosa ; offering her in exchange for the three bulbs a head-dress of pure gold. Whereupon the guileless girl, though ignorant of the value of the robbery he had

proposed to her, in spite of the reward he had offered, advised him to have recourse to the executioner, who was not only the last judge, but also the condemned man's heir.

This advice prompted Boxtel's next action. At his instigation the trial had been set in motion, which had ended in the sentence that was to be carried into effect without delay. Isaac, therefore, had no time to corrupt any one else, and at Rosa's suggestion he went straight to the headsman.

Boxtel never imagined for a moment but that Cornelius would die with the tulips next his heart. It was not in Boxtell to allow for two possibilities ; Rosa, who stood for love, and William of Orange, who stood for statecraft.

The wretch's calculations would have been accurate in the absence of Rosa and William. But for William, Cornelius would have died. But for Rosa, Cornelius would have died with his bulbs next his heart.

So Boxtell went to seek the headsman, representing himself as a great friend of the condemned man ; and setting apart the silver and gold jewels belonging by law to the headsman, he bought for the rather high price of a hundred guilders all Van Baerle's clothes on his death.

But of what account were a hundred guilders to a man almost certain of securing with this sum the Haarlem Society's prize?

It was but money lent at a thousand per cent., a fair enough investment. The executioner, for his part, had little or nothing to do in order to pocket his hundred guilders. He had only to let Mynheer Boxtel ascend the scaffold so soon as the execution was over, and carry off with the help of his servants his friend's corpse.

It was an ordinary custom among the faithful friends when one of their leaders was put to death publicly in the Buytenhof Square. A lunatic such as Cornelius might well possess fanatic friends who would give a hundred guilders for his relics. So the headsman agreed to the arrangement on one condition, that he should be paid in

advance. Boxtel might turn nasty, like people who visit the shows at a country fair, and refuse to pay when all was over.

Boxtel accordingly paid beforehand, and waited the result. His subsequent emotions may easily be conjectured; how he eyed the guards, the Recorder, the headsman, how Van Baerle's every movement put him in a fever! How would the condemned man put his head on the block? how would he fall? in falling would he crush the priceless bulbs, or had he taken care to enclose them in a gold box, gold being the hardest metal?—thus did Boxtel torture himself. It is impossible to describe the condition of this worthy creature at the delay of the execution. What did the headsman mean by wasting his time in idle flourishes of his sword over Cornelius's head instead of taking it off at a blow? But when Boxtel saw the Recorder take the condemned man's hand and raise him, while drawing a parchment at the same time from his own pocket, when he heard the public reading of the Stadtholder's pardon, Boxtel was transformed into a very devil. The rage of a tiger, a hyena, a serpent, blazed from his eyes and declared itself in outcry and gesture. If he could have got at Van Baerle, he would have flung himself on him and killed him.

After all, Cornelius would live, would go to Loewestein and take his bulbs with him into his prison, and as likely as not he would manage to find a garden where he would make his black tulip bloom! Some catastrophes are beyond the pen of any scribe, and our readers must fill in the tragedy for themselves.

Boxtel fainted dead away and tumbled headlong from his stone seat on to the backs of some Orangists, who were as disgusted almost as he at the failure of their hopes. These men, mistaking his cries for cries of exultation, pommelled him severely with their fists, in a style which would not have disgraced a gang of English bruisers.

But what were a few odd cuffs on the top of Boxtel's crushing disappointment?

His only thought was to hurry after the coach that

was carrying off Cornelius and his bulbs. Rushing blindly forward, he stumbled against a paving-stone and went spinning over and over, only recovering his senses and footing to find himself a mass of mud and bruises, for the rabble of The Hague had freely trodden him underfoot as they dispersed.

Most people would have thought Boxtel, in tatters, his back bruised, his hands lacerated, would have felt he had suffered more than enough for one day. Not so. For no sooner was he on his feet than he tore out his hair in handfuls, an offering, as it were, to the amiable goddess of Envy, who, according to mythology, fancies live serpents by way of a head-dress.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DORDRECHT PIGEONS

IT was a great honour, unquestionably, for Cornelius van Baerle to be confined in the same prison as that which had received the learned Grotius. But, arrived at the prison, a still greater honour awaited him. He found that the cell which had formerly been allotted to Barneveldt's illustrious friend at Loewestein was empty at the time the Prince of Orange's clemency sent the tulip-fancier Van Baerle there.

This cell had a disagreeable reputation in the Castle, since, thanks to his wife's ingenuity, Mynheer Grotius had been able to escape in the famous book-chest that two goalers had forgotten to examine.

However, to Van Baerle it seemed an auspicious omen that this cell should have been given him for his lodging, for in his opinion a gaoler should not have placed a second pigeon in the cage from which one had already so easily flown away. The cell is historic. We will, therefore, omit the description of it, and only draw the reader's attention to an alcove that had been prepared for the use of Madame Grotius. It was a cell similar to the others, perhaps a little higher, and had moreover a lovely view from its barred window. But the interest of our story is not concerned with the mere description of rooms. Life to Van Baerle was something more than a breathing apparatus. The poor prisoner loved, over and beyond his mere existence, two things his dreams alone could bring before his eyes. A flower and a woman ; both, he believed, lost for ever.

Fortunately Van Baerle was mistaken. God, who had beheld him with infinite pity as he prepared himself for the scaffold, had reserved for him, even in his prison, a more thrilling life than is the usual lot of the tulip-fancier.

One morning, as he was drinking in draughts of the fresh air from the Waal, and was admiring in the distance the windmills of his native city of Dordrecht gleaming behind a forest of chimneys, he saw a flock of pigeons come flying from that quarter of the horizon and then settle themselves, fluttering in the sun, on the gables and pinnacles of Loewestein.

"Those pigeons," thought Van Baerle, "come from Dordrecht, and it follows they can return there. If a man fastened a note to one of those pigeons' wings, he might send news of himself to Dordrecht, where some one is distressed on his account. Then, after a moment's further thought, he added, "I will be that man."

A young fellow of twenty-eight is patient when he is condemned to lifelong imprisonment, that is to say for possibly twenty-two or twenty-three thousand days.

Van Baerle, thinking of his three bulbs—for the memory of them throbbed in his heart as surely as his heart did in his breast—made a snare for the pigeons. He tempted them with all the resources of his kitchen, such as they were for eight stivers, or sixpence, a day. At last, after a month's fruitless efforts, he caught a hen bird.

It took him two other months to catch a male ; then he shut them up together, and at the beginning of the year 1673, having secured several eggs, he let the hen go. The bird, quite happy that the male would hatch the eggs for her, flew off joyously to Dordrecht with Van Baerle's note under her wing.

That evening she returned. She still had the note. She kept it in this manner for fifteen days, to Van Baerle's disappointment at first, and finally to his intense despair.

But on the sixteenth day she returned without it. Van Baerle had addressed it to his old nurse, and im-

plored any charitable soul who found it to have it placed in her hands as safely and quickly as possible. In this letter addressed to his nurse, he enclosed a small note for Rosa. Providence, that bids the winds carry the wall-flower seeds to the walls of old castles, and with a little rain causes them to blossom, brought it to pass that the old nurse received this letter.

In this way it came about. On leaving Dordrecht for The Hague and The Hague for Gorcum, Mynheer Isaac Boxtel had not only deserted his house, his servant, his observatory, his telescopes, but also his pigeons.

The servant, whom he had left without any wages, at first lived on what little savings he had put by, and afterwards started eating the pigeons. The pigeons, discovering the state of affairs, emigrated from Isaac Boxtel's roof to Cornelius Van Baerle's.

The nurse was a kindly hearted creature to whom it was a necessity to have something to love. She welcomed the pigeons which begged her hospitality, and when Isaac's servant claimed them in order to devour the last twelve or fifteen, as he had devoured the others, she proposed to buy them from him at six stivers a head. This was just double what the pigeons were worth, and the man jumped at the bargain, leaving the nurse in possession. These, then, were the pigeons that in company with some others visited The Hague, Loewestein, Rotterdam, on their journeys to seek different corn, and hemp-seed of another flavour. Providence, which orders all things, had ruled that one of these identical pigeons should be snared by Van Baerle. Logically, therefore, if Boxtel had not left Dordrecht to follow his rival to The Hague, and afterwards to Gorcum or Loewestein—the two localities being only separated by the junction of the Waal and of the Meuse—Van Baerle's little note would have fallen into his hands and not into those of the nurse.

And the poor prisoner, like the crow of the Roman cobbler, would have sacrificed time and labour for nothing, and instead of having to relate a variety of events open-

ing out under our pen like a carpet of innumerable colours, we should have had to describe a series of long and dull and weariful days as colourless as night.

The note, however, came into the nurse's hands.

So it happened that in the beginning of February, one evening when the twilight was darkening and revealing the young stars peeping out in the sky, Cornelius heard on the turret staircase a voice that thrilled him through and through. Setting his hand to his heart he listened.

It was Rosa's exquisite, musical voice. We cannot pretend that Cornelius was so overcome with amazement, so delirious with joy as he would have been excepting for the pigeon episode. In exchange for his letter the pigeon had brought him back hope under her empty wing, and every day he expected, for he knew Rosa, to have news of his love and his bulbs, if indeed she had received the note. He rose and listened eagerly, bending his ear towards the door.

Yes ; there was no doubting the accents which had penetrated his heart at The Hague.

Rosa, who had accomplished the journey from The Hague to Loewestein ; Rosa, who had succeeded, Cornelius could not imagine how, in getting into the prison ; would Rosa also happily succeed in securing a meeting with the prisoner ?

While Cornelius was piling up conjecture on conjecture, and was torn this way and that between eagerness and anxiety, the grating in the door of his cell opened, and Rosa, brilliant with triumph, dressed in a gay gown, and lovelier than ever from the sorrow that for the last five months had given a softer and tenderer expression to her countenance, pressed her face against the bars and said :

" Oh, Sir, Sir, here I am ! "

Cornelius stretched out his arms with a grateful glance heavenward, and exclaimed in delight :

" Oh ! Rosa, Rosa ! "

" Hush ! speak low ; my father is just behind me. "

“Your father?”

“Yes; he is in the courtyard at the bottom of the staircase; the Governor is giving him instructions, he is coming up in a moment.”

“The Governor is giving him instructions?”

“Listen, and I will try and tell you everything in a word. The Stadtholder has a country-house about a league from Leyden, mostly a great dairy. My aunt, who was his nurse, has the care of all the animals on the farm. Directly I received your note, which unfortunately I couldn't read, alas! but made your nurse read it me, I hurried to my aunt's house. There I stayed till the Prince came to the dairy. Then I begged of him that he would let my father exchange his post as head-gaoler of the Buytenhof for the same post here in the fortress of Loewestein. He had no suspicions of my reason; had he known, perhaps he would have refused. Instead, he granted my petition.”

“And so you are here?”

“Yes, as you see.”

“So that I shall see you every day?”

“As often as I can come.”

“Oh, Rosa, my beautiful Madonna Rosa, you love me a little, then?”

“A little!” she said. “Oh, you do not ask for very much, Mynheer Cornelius.”

Cornelius stretched out his hands passionately towards her, but only their fingers could clasp each other through the iron bars.

“Here comes my father!” cried the girl.

And Rosa turned swiftly from the door and hurried towards old Gryphus, who was appearing at the head of the staircase.

CHAPTER XV

THE GRATED DOOR

THE mastiff was close at Gryphus's heels. The dog was making his round of the prison, so that he should know the prisoners, in case of necessity.

"Father," said Rosa, "this is the famous room from which Mynheer Grotius escaped. You remember Mynheer Grotius?"

"Certainly. I remember that rascally Grotius—a friend of that scoundrel Barneveldt, whom I saw executed when I was a child. Grotius! Ah, indeed! and so it was from this room he escaped. Good! I will take precious care nobody escapes from it after him."

And opening the door, he talked in the gathering darkness with the prisoner.

The dog *did* his duty likewise, smelling round the prisoner's legs and growling, as if to ask him what right he had to be still alive, when he had seen him leave the Buytenhof between the Recorder and the headsman.

But lovely Rosa called off the dog, and he went to her.

"Mynheer," said Gryphus, lifting his lantern to try and throw a little light round him, "I am your new gaoler. I am the chief turnkey here now, and all the cells are under my superintendence. I am not evilly disposed, but I am quite determined to keep order."

"I know you perfectly well, my good Gryphus," said the prisoner, entering the circle of light cast by the lantern.

"What! what! It's you, Mynheer van Baerle!" exclaimed Gryphus. "On my word, this is extraordinary! How odd that we should meet again!"

"Yes; and I'm delighted to see, Gryphus, that your arm is healed all right, as it's with that arm you hold your lantern."

Gryphus frowned. "The matter of fact is," he said, "that somehow or other people always muddle politics. His Highness granted you your life; nothing would have induced me to do so."

"Indeed! And why not!"

"Because you are just the man to start conspiring again. You learned men are in league with the devil."

"Now really, Gryphus, are you dissatisfied, then, with the way I set your arm, or the price I asked you for doing it?" Cornelius said, laughing.

"Zounds, no!" growled the gaoler. "You set it only too well. There was certainly some hocus-pocus about it. At the end of six weeks it was as useful to me as if nothing had ever been wrong with it. Indeed, it was such a miracle that the doctor of the Buytenhof, who knows his business, wanted me to break it again, so as to have it set according to rules. And he promised me that I should not be able to use it for three months."

"And you didn't consent?"

"I said, 'No, thank you. As long as I can make the sign of the cross with the arm'"—Gryphus was a good Catholic—"I needn't bother my head about the devil."

"But if you are not afraid of the devil, Gryphus, why should you trouble yourself about poor bookworms?"

"Bookworms! bookworms! I would rather have ten soldiers to guard than one scholar. Soldiers smoke and drink and fuddle themselves; they are as mild as so many sheep, if only you give them brandy or moselle. But a scholar drink, smoke, get fuddled! Not he! He is sober, and careful, and keeps his brain clear for plotting. But I may as well tell you at once—you will not find it so very easy to plot here. To start with, you will not be allowed books or paper, or scribblement of any sort

It was all along of his books that Mynheer Grotius got away."

"I assure you, Gryphus," answered Van Baerle, "perhaps the idea may have occurred to me for a moment, but it has quite vanished now."

"That's all right," said Gryphus. "Be careful of yourself, and I will be careful too. All the same, all the same, his Highness made a foolish blunder."

"In not chopping off my head? Many thanks, Gryphus."

"Of course. For instance, the brothers De Witt don't make any more fuss now."

"What a brutal thing to say, Gryphus." And Van Baerle turned away his head to hide his disgust. "You forget that one of those unfortunate men was my friend, and the other—the other was like a father to me."

"That may be, but I also remember that they were both conspirators. And I am speaking from motives of philanthropy."

"Really! Tell me what you are hinting at, Gryphus. I don't quite understand you."

"Suppose you had left your head on Master Harbruck's block, eh?"

"Well?"

"Yes, it would have been well; you wouldn't have suffered any more. While I—I won't attempt to hide it from you, I mean to make your life a burden to you here!"

"Thank you for your candour, Gryphus."

And as the prisoner smiled ironically at the gaoler, Rosa, from behind the door, comforted him with an angelic smile.

Gryphus walked towards the window.

There was still enough daylight to see indistinctly a vast horizon being slowly wrapped in a grey mist.

"What sort of view have you from here?" asked the gaoler.

"A very beautiful view," Cornelius said, looking at Rosa.

"Yes, yes, I see." Too much of a view, too much of a view," Gryphus answered.

As he spoke, two pigeons, alarmed at sight of him, and still more by the unfamiliar voice, came out from their nest and, fluttering their wings with fright, disappeared in the fog.

"What the devil's that?" asked the gaoler.

"My pigeons," replied Cornelius.

"My pigeons!" cried the gaoler. "'My pigeons,' indeed! A prisoner has nothing of his own."

"Well," Cornelius answered, "the pigeons a good God lent me, if you would rather have it so."

"Already a breach of the rules! Pigeons, indeed!" Gryphus went on, "Young man, I warn you of one thing, which is, that no later than to-morrow these birds shall stew in my pot."

"You will have to catch them first of all, Gryphus; you won't allow they are my pigeons. I swear they are still less yours than mine."

"To postpone is not to lose," growled the gaoler; "and you may be sure of this—by to-morrow, at latest, I will wring their necks."

And as he made this ugly threat to Cornelius, Gryphus looked out to examine the build of the nest.

Van Baerle seized the opportunity to run to the door, and squeeze Rosa's hand.

"At nine o'clock this evening," she whispered.

Quite determined to catch the pigeons on the morrow, as he had boasted he would do, Gryphus saw nothing, heard nothing, of what had passed behind his back; he then closed the windows, took his daughter by the arm, and went out.

Giving a double turn to the lock, and drawing the bolts, he set off to bully another prisoner.

Scarcely was he gone when Cornelius hurried to the door to listen to his footsteps in the distance. No longer hearing them, he ran to the window, and wrecked the nest. He preferred to drive away for ever the gentle

feathered messengers to whom he owed the happiness of Rosa's presence than chance their death.

The goaler's visit, his ugly threats, the gloomy vista opening out before Cornelius, of constant, harrying espionage, were powerless to banish from his mind the exquisite dreams and radiant hope the sight of Rosa had re-awakened in him.

How impatiently he waited for nine o'clock to strike from the tower of Loewestein !

Rosa had said : " Expect me at nine."

The last brazen note was still vibrating in the air when Cornelius heard a light step and the rustle of the beautiful Frisian's dress on the staircase, and almost at once the little barred opening in the door on which Cornelius's eyes were fastened was lit up.

The shutter was opened from outside.

" Here I am," said Rosa, out of breath from running up the stairs, " here I am."

" Oh, kind Rosa ! "

" Then you're pleased to see me ? "

" You can ask it ? But how did you manage to come ? Tell me."

" You must listen, then. As soon as he has had his supper every evening my father goes to sleep ; then, as he is a little stupefied with gin, I make him go to bed. Don't tell this to any one, for, thanks to this sleep, I can always come and talk with you for an hour."

" Oh, thank you, Rosa, dear Rosa ! "

And, saying these words, Cornelius put his face so near the small window that Rosa withdrew hers.

" I have brought you back your bulbs," she said.

Cornelius's heart bounded with delight. He had not dared as yet to ask Rosa what she had done with the precious treasure he had entrusted to her.

" Ah, you have kept them, then ! "

" Didn't you give them me as something you greatly prized ? "

" Yes ; but because I had given them you, I supposed they belonged to you."

"They were to be mine after your death ; but, thank Heaven, you are alive. Ah, how I have blessed his Highness ! If God grants Prince William all the happiness I have wished him, he will be not only the happiest man in his dominions, but in the whole world. You were living, I said to myself, and while treasuring your godfather's Bible, I was determined to restore you your bulbs. Only it baffled me how I was to do it. At last I had made up my mind to go and ask the Stadtholder to give my father the gaoler's post at Loewestein. Then appeared the nurse with your note ! We wept much together, I promise you. But your letter strengthened my resolution. So I left for Leyden ; and you know what happened after that."

"What, dear Rosa !" answered Cornelius, "before you had received my letter, you thought of coming to see after me ?"

"Thought of it !" answered Rosa, letting her bashfulness give place to her love. "I thought of nothing else !"

As she spoke Rosa's face glowed with such beauty, that, for the second time, Cornelius quickly pressed his brow and lips against the grating—in his gratitude no doubt to the beautiful girl. But Rosa stepped back as before.

"Really, I've often been sorry," she said, with the coquetry natural to every young girl, "that I didn't know how to read, but never so grievously sorry as when your old nurse brought me your letter. I held it closely in my hands—this letter that spoke to others, and that was dumb for poor stupid me."

"You have really been often sorry that you cannot read ? On what occasion ?"

"Why, of course," said the girl, laughing, "I should like to read all the letters that are written me."

"You have received letters, Rosa ?"

"By hundreds."

"But who wrote to you, then ?"

"Who wrote to me ? Let me see. To begin with,

all the students who crossed the Square of the Buytenhof, all the Officers who went by to parade, all the clerks, and even the merchants who saw me at my little window."

"And what did you do with all these little notes, dear Rosa?"

"At first, I made some friend or other read them to me, and that was great fun. But lately, it seemed a waste of time listening to such rubbish, so that I've burnt them."

"Lately?" cried Cornelius, with a puzzled look of love and happiness.

Rosa's eye fell, and she blushed. Thus she was not heeding Cornelius as his face approached her; but, alas! Cornelius's lips only came into contact with the grating. Still, in spite of this obstacle, they sent the warm breath of a most tender kiss to the girl's lips.

At this passionate expression of love, Rosa became as pale, perhaps even paler than she had been at the Buytenhof on the day of the execution. She uttered a piteous little cry, closed her beautiful eyes, and fled, trying in vain to quiet the beating of her heart.

Cornelius, left alone, could only console himself with the sweet fragrance of Rosa's hair that lingered about the little grating.

So impulsive was her flight, she forgot after all to give Cornelius the three bulbs of the black tulip.

CHAPTER XVI

MASTER AND SCHOLAR

THE worthy Gryphus by no means shared his daughter's kindly feelings for Cornelius de Witt's godson. There were only five prisoners at Loewestein, and the head-gaoler's duty was simplicity itself, the post being generally reserved as a reward for long service.

But the self-important gaoler in his zeal had magnified his task with all the strength of his imagination. To his mind Cornelius had assumed the exaggerated proportions of a criminal of the first rank. Hence he was to be considered the most dangerous of the prisoners. And Gryphus set himself to watch the poor fellow's every step, never approaching him except with a fierce look, punishing him for what he called his outrageous mutiny against the most noble of Stadtholders.

Three times a day he would enter Van Baerle's room feeling confident of surprising him in a breach of the rules, but Cornelius had given up letter-writing, now that his correspondent was not far to seek. It is more than likely that, had he regained full liberty and unrestricted leave to go where he would, the prison with Rosa and his bulbs would have seemed more desirable to him than any other home without his bulbs and Rosa.

Rosa promised to come every evening at nine o'clock to chat with him, and she had kept her word.

Next evening she stole up with the same precautions. Only this time she had resolved not to let her face go too near the grating.

Moreover, to engage Van Baerle's attention seriously at the very start, she first of all handed him through the

grating his three bulbs still wrapped in the same paper.

But to Rosa's amazement Van Baerle pushed back her white hand with the tips of his fingers.

The young man had been considering the matter in all its bearings.

"Listen to me," he said. "We run too great a risk in trusting our whole fortune on one throw. Remember, Rosa dear, I am attempting what the whole world has agreed to think impossible—the creation of a beautiful Black Tulip. Let us, then, give our whole hearts to it, so that in the event of failure we can console ourselves with the thought that at least we did our best. I think we may secure our object most surely by a certain course of action."

Rosa gave undivided attention to his words, more because of the importance the tulip-fancier set on the flowers than for any interest of her own in them.

"I will show you," said Cornelius, "how I think we can work together. You must have a small garden or courtyard, or terrace of some sort, attached to this fortress."

"We have a noble garden stretching along the bank of the Waal, and it is full of beautiful old trees."

"Do you think you could manage, dear, to bring a little earth for me to examine?"

"I will to-morrow."

"Bring some from a shady spot and some that has the blaze of the sun, so that I can judge both the dry and the moist soil."

"You may be quite easy about it."

"Having chosen the soil and, if necessary, having modified it, we will separate our three bulbs; then you must take one and plant it on the day I tell you in the ground I have chosen. It will flower without fail, if you tend it as I would have you do."

"I will not leave it for a second."

"You must give me another, which I will try to grow here in my cell. It will be a boon to me to have to look after it all the long day when I never see you. I

confess I haven't much confidence in rearing it, and I shall always pity it as having been sacrificed to my selfishness. Still, the sun does sometimes visit me. Besides, I will use artificial means in every possible and impossible way, even the hot ashes from my pipe shall be called into service. Lastly, we—or rather you—must keep in reserve the third bulb, our last hope, should the other experiments miscarry. You see, Rosa dear, by hook or by crook we shall win the hundred thousand guilders for your marriage-portion, and think of our delight at our success!"

"I quite understand," said Rosa. "To-morrow I will bring you some soil, and you shall choose yours and mine. As to yours, I shall have to go pretty often to fetch it, as I can only bring you a little at a time."

"Oh, you needn't hurry about it, Rosa; there is no necessity for the bulbs to be planted for at least a month. We have oceans of time. Only I do trust that you will closely follow my instructions when you plant yours."

"I promise you I will."

"And once planted, you will let me share with you every single detail in connection with our nursling; atmospheric changes, footprints on the paths or borders, for instance. You will have a keen ear at night lest cats should be prowling about the garden. Two of the wretched animals worked havoc with some of my borders at Dordrecht."

"I will be sure to listen."

"And on moonlight nights—— Have you ever looked at your garden at such times, dear child?"

"My bedroom window overlooks it."

"Excellent! On moonlight nights you will watch to see if any rats come out from holes in the wall. Rats are fearfully voracious, and I have known unhappy tulip-growers find great fault with Noah for having let a couple of rats take refuge in the Ark."

"I will watch, and if there are cats or rats——"

"You will be sure to tell me? Good! Also,"

continued Van Baerle, having developed suspicion since his imprisonment, "there is a far more dangerous animal than either the cat or rat!"

"What animal?"

"Man! You see, Rosa dear, a man will steal a guilder and risk prison for the wretched coin, then how much more likely is any one to steal a tulip worth a hundred thousand guilders."

"No one shall ever go into the garden but me."

"You promise me that?"

"On my honour!"

"Excellent, Rosa! Thank you, thank you, dear Rosa! How all happiness seems coming to me from you!"

And as Van Baerle's lips approached the grating as passionately as the day before, and since it was also time to go, Rosa drew back her head and stretched out her hand.

In her pretty hand, which she took especial pains to keep always soft and white, lay the precious bulb.

Passionately Cornelius kissed the tips of her fingers. Was it because this hand held one of the bulbs of the inestimable black tulip? Or because the hand was Rosa's? Let wiser heads solve the enigma.

Rosa then went off with the two other bulbs, pressing them close to her heart. Did she hold them to her breast because they were the grand black-tulip bulbs, or because they had come from Cornelius Van Baerle? We think this point is easier of solution than the other.

Account for it as you may, from this moment life was sweeter and more full of interest for the prisoner.

Rosa, we know, had returned him one of the bulbs. Every evening she brought him handful after handful of soil from that part of the garden he had decided was the best, and the soil, indeed, was all that could be wished.

A large jug which Cornelius had cleverly broken made him a capital flower-pot. He half filled it and mixed the earth Rosa had brought from the garden with a little

river-mud which he had dried, and this provided him with just the right sort of soil. Then about the beginning of April he planted the first bulb in it.

It is beyond words to describe the pains, adroitness and cunning Cornelius took to divert the attention of Gryphus from his delightful occupation. A century of emotions and thought may be concentrated in half an hour by a philosophical prisoner.

Not a day passed without some talk with Rosa. Tulips—and Rosa was initiated into the mysteries of their culture—furnished an endless subject; but interesting as this subject was, their conversation was not strictly confined to tulips.

It soon wandered to other things, and to his great surprise, the tulip-fancier discovered a wide field for discussion.

Rosa, however, had suddenly formed a peculiar habit; this was, to hold her beautiful face invariably just six inches from the grating. The lovely Frisian, perhaps, was mistrustful of herself since she had felt how a prisoner's breath, even through a grating, can kindle a glow in a girl's heart.

One thing especially perturbed the tulip-fancier nearly as much as his bulbs, and his thoughts constantly returned to it. It was Rosa's dependence on her father.

Thus the life of the scholar, of the accomplished artist, of the highly cultured man, of the probable creator of a floral gem to be called the *Rosa Barlæensis*—this life, nay, more than life, the happiness of this man depended on the caprice of another man. And this other was a being of an inferior type, of the basest sort; a gaoler rather less intelligent than his own locks, and harder than his own bolts and bars. A Caliban-like creature, something between a man and a brute.

This was the creature on whom the happiness of Cornelius depended. Any fine morning this gaoler might tire of Loewestein, fancy the air there disagreed with him, that the gin of the place was not good, and go off, taking his daughter with him.

Then once more Cornelius and Rosa would be divided. Who knows whether Providence would ever bring them together again ?

"Then of what use would the carrier-pigeons be," Cornelius said to the girl ; "as you do not know how to read what I should write to you, Rosa, and cannot write what you think to me ?"

"Ah, well !" answered Rosa, who in the bottom of her heart was as much afraid of separation as Cornelius, "we have an hour every evening, let us make the best use of it."

"But it seems to me," answered Cornelius, "we do make a fairly good use of it."

"Let us use it still better," said Rosa, smiling. "Teach me to read and write ; I shall make the most of your lessons, believe me, and so we shall never be separated, except by our own wish."

"Oh, then !" cried Cornelius, "we have eternity before us."

Rosa smiled, and gently shrugged her shoulders.

"Are you to stop in prison always ?" she said. "After having granted you your life, surely his Highness will grant you liberty ? Will they not restore you your property, and will you not be rich again ? Once free and rich, when you ride by on horseback, or drive in your carriage, will you deign to look at little Rosa, the gaoler's daughter, not much better than the headsman's ?"

Cornelius was about to protest, and he would certainly have done so with all his heart, and the truthfulness of a soul filled with love. But the girl interrupted him.

"How is your tulip getting on ?" she asked smiling.

This was an expedient of Rosa's, as talking to Cornelius of his tulip made him oblivious of everything, even of Rosa herself.

"Fairly well," he said ; "the pellicle is blackening, the sprouting has started, the veins of the bulb are swelling ; in eight days' time, perhaps before, we shall be able

to distinguish the first shooting of the leaves. And what about yours, Rosa ? ”

“ Oh ! I—I have done splendidly, and just as you told me.”

“ Come, Rosa, tell me what you have done,” said Cornelius, his eyes eloquent, his breath coming quickly, as on the evening when he had made Rosa blush and her heart beat.

“ I have done splendidly,” she said smiling, for in the recesses of her being she could not resist the study of the prisoner’s duplicate love for her and for the black tulip ; “ I have done finely. I prepared a bed as you told me, far from trees and walls, in soil lightly blended with sand, moist rather than dry, without one atom of rock or pebble, just the border you wished.”

“ Well, well, Rosa.”

“ The soil is all prepared and lying fallow for you further orders. The first beautiful day you will tell me to plant my bulb, and I will plant it. You know I should be later than you, for I have every advantage of pure air, sun and abundance of moisture.”

“ That’s true, that’s true,” cried Cornelius, clapping his hands with glee ; “ and you are a clever pupil, Rosa, and will certainly carry off your hundred thousand guilders.”

“ Don’t forget,” said Rosa, laughing, “ that your scholar, as you call me, has something else to learn beside the growing of tulips.”

“ Yes, yes, and I am as anxious as you can be, my pretty Rosa, that you should learn to read.”

“ When shall we begin ? ”

“ At once.”

“ No, to-morrow.”

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST OF THE THREE SEEDLINGS

ROSA returned, as we said, with Cornelius de Witt's Bible. Then began between master and pupil one of those charming scenes which gladden the Romancer's heart, when he is fortunate enough to find them lying ready to his pen.

The little window, the only opening through which the two lovers could communicate, was too high for comfortably reading the book Rosa brought, though hitherto it had sufficed for them to read each other's faces.

It followed, the girl was forced to lean against the grating, her head bending forward, the book held up to the light which she supported in her right hand. Cornelius, however, to give her rest, thought of a happy device by which he fastened the lamp to the bars with a handkerchief. Rosa could then follow with one of her fingers the words and syllables which Cornelius made her spell, while he pointed out the letters one by one with a straw to his industrious pupil through the grating.

The light of the lamp shone on Rosa's vivid complexion, her deep, blue eyes, her golden hair under its casque of burnished gold, the national head-dress of the Friesland girls. It shone on her uplifted fingers, which, thus illuminated, took so rosy and transparent a hue that the life-blood seemed actually visible as it coursed through the delicate veins.

Rosa's intelligence expanded rapidly under the ani-

mating and exhilarating influence of Cornelius's mind, and when difficulties seemed insurmountable, a look into each other's eyes, the twitch of an eyelash, the mingling of their hair, freed electric sparks strong enough to illuminate even the darkness of idiocy.

Then having returned to her room, Rosa would go over the reading-lesson by herself, and at the same time her heart would repeat its unavowed lesson of love.

One evening she came half an hour later than usual. This was far too serious a loss for Cornelius not to inquire as to its cause.

"Oh, don't scold!" said the girl; "it wasn't my fault. My father has renewed his acquaintance with an old friend who used to come frequently to The Hague, begging to be allowed to see the prison. He is a good sort of fellow, fond of his bottle, with a store of amusing anecdotes, and very free with his money."

"Is that all you know of him?" Cornelius asked, astonished.

"All; indeed, it is only since about the last fortnight that my father has taken to making much of this new-comer who visits him so assiduously."

"Oh!" said Cornelius, shaking his head in distrust, for each fresh occurrence filled him with misgivings, "perhaps he is some spy, like those sent into gaols to watch both prisoners and their warders."

"I don't think so," Rosa said, smiling. "If this worthy fellow is spying after any one, it isn't my father."

"Who is it, then?"

"Why not after me?"

"You?"

"Well, why not?" said Rosa, laughing.

"Ah, true," said Cornelius, sighing. "Your suitors will not always sigh in vain, Rosa. Perhaps this fellow will become your husband, after all."

"Perhaps."

"And what reason have you to anticipate this pleasure?"

"Pleasure! rather say fear, Mynheer Cornelius."

"Thank you, Rosa, you are right ; this fear——"

"I will tell you my reason."

"I am listening ; tell me."

"The man used to come again and again to the Buytenhof. Stay, it was at the time you were imprisoned there. When I left, he left too. Now I am come here, he comes too. At The Hague he made an excuse that he wished to see you."

"To see me ?"

"Oh, it was only an excuse, for he might just as well urge the same reason to-day, now you are again my father's prisoner, but the man never troubles himself any more about you. Indeed, only yesterday I heard him tell my father he did not know you."

"Go on with your account, Rosa, that I may try and discover who this man is, and what he wants."

"You feel confident, Mynheer Cornelius, that none of your friends may be interested in you ?"

"I have no friends, Rosa ; there is only my old nurse ; you know her and she knows you. Poor Zug, she would come forward herself without excuse or pretence, and stand weeping before your father and you, and say, 'Dear Sir, or dear lady, my child is here, think of my misery, let me see him, if only for one hour, and I will pray to God all my life for you.' Oh no ! setting aside Zug, I have no friends."

"Then I can only fall back on my first idea, and the more so, since only yesterday at sunset, as I was preparing the border in which I was going to plant your bulb, I saw a shadow, through the open gate, gliding behind the elder trees and aspens. I went on working as if I had noticed nothing, but it was this man. He hid himself, watched me digging the ground, and there was no longer any doubt that it was I he was spying upon, I whom he had followed. Not a stroke of my rake, not an atom of soil that I touched, escaped his observation."

"Oh yes, yes ! of course he is a lover," said Cornelius. "Is he young and handsome ?"

And he scrutinized Rosa jealously, waiting anxiously for her answer.

"Young, handsome?" cried Rosa, bursting out laughing. "He is hideous, deformed, about fifty years old, and never dares to look me in the face, or speak in a natural voice."

"What is his name?"

"Jacob Gisels."

"I don't know him."

"You understand, then, that he is not after you."

"However, if he loves you, Rosa, which is very possible, since to see you is to love you, are you sure you don't love him?"

"Heavens, no!"

"You wish me to be happy about that?"

"I beg you."

"Well, as you are beginning to know how to read, Rosa, you will be able to read whatever I write to you of all the tortures of jealousy and separation I may suffer."

"I can read it, if only you will write in big letters." As the tone the conversation had taken alarmed Rosa, she said, "By the by, is your tulip getting on as it should?"

"Just imagine my delight, Rosa. I was looking at it in the sun this morning, and very gently brushing off the soil covering the bulb, and there was the first green spike sprouting up! Rosa, my heart nearly burst with joy! This pale, almost invisible shoot, that a fly's wing might tear off, this tender suggestion of a life that may develop into absolute beauty, moved me far more than his Highness's reprieve on the Buytenhof scaffold."

"You think it may bloom, then?" Rosa said delightedly.

"Indeed, I think it will!"

"And when will it be time for me to plant my bulb?"

"On the first favourable day I will tell you to plant it. But remember above all to let no one help you; do

not confide your secret to a single living creature. The sight of the bulb alone would be enough for a connoisseur instantly to recognise its value ; and whatever you do, dearest Rosa, guard, guard with your life the third and last bulb."

"It's quite safe, and wrapped up in the very same paper you gave it me in, Mynheer Cornelius, and put away in my chest under my laces, which keep it dry without weighing too heavily on it. But now, 'Good night,' poor prisoner."

"What, already ?"

"I must."

"To come so late, and go so soon !"

"My father might grow impatient at not seeing me return ; and my lover might suspect a rival."

She listened anxiously.

"What is it ?" asked Van Baerle.

"I fancied I heard something."

"What ? what ?"

"It sounded like a step creaking on the staircase."

"At least, that couldn't be your father ; we hear him ever so far away."

"No, it's not my father, I'm sure ; but——"

"But ?"

"But it might be Mynheer Jacob."

Rosa dashed out on to the staircase, and heard a door shut to sharply before she had descended ten steps.

Cornelius was most uneasy, but further trials were before him. When Fate is preparing herself to work mischief, it is seldom she does not first sound a note of warning, as a fencer gives his adversary time to place himself on guard. Yet almost invariably man's prescience and ominous signs from inanimate objects—less inanimate, perhaps, than they are generally supposed to be—are unregarded. There is a whistling in the air, and the head receives a blow which might have been avoided, had the premonition been heeded.

The day after nothing out of the way happened. Gryphus paid his usual three visits, and he discovered

nothing. Although, to surprise his prisoner's secrets, Gryphus varied the hours of his visits, as soon as Van Baerle heard his gaoler coming, by the help of a mechanical contrivance—similar to that used in farms for the letting down or raising sacks of corn—he lowered his jug below the ledge of tiles and stone under his window. By means of the mosses growing on these tiles, and in the crannies of the stones, he concealed the cords of his pulley.

The imagination of Gryphus did not help him to discover this, and for a week the plan was most successful.

But one morning when a furious wind that made the turret creak was raging, Cornelius, absorbed in the study of his bulb, which had thrust out a sturdy shoot, did not hear the approach of old Gryphus: the door suddenly opened, and Cornelius was caught with his improvised flower-pot on his knee.

With the swiftness of a hawk pouncing on its prey, Gryphus, seeing an unknown object, and consequently a forbidden one, in the prisoner's hands, seized hold of it.

Chance, or the fatal capacity for mischief the spirit of evil endows malicious beings with, brought his great horny hand—the identical one he had broken at the wrist, and Cornelius had re-set—straight down on to the jug where in its earthen bed lay the precious bulb.

"What have you got there?" he growled. "Ah, I've caught you!"

And he plunged his fingers into the mould.

"I? Nothing, nothing!" cried Cornelius, trembling all over.

"So I've caught you at it! A pitcher, and soil! There is some infamous plot here!"

"Good master Gryphus!" entreated Van Baerle, all a-quiver, like a partridge robbed of her young brood by a reaper.

Gryphus, indeed, was raking up the soil with his crooked fingers.

"Take care ! take care !" cried Cornelius, his face turning deathly white.

"Take care of what ?" roared the gaoler.

"I implore you take care of it ; you will kill it !"

And with a quick, desperate movement he wrenched the jug out of the gaoler's hands, then, closing his arms round it, pressed it to his bosom as a treasure he would never, never part with.

But Gryphus, with the obstinacy of age, and all the more convinced that he was on the verge of discovering a conspiracy against the Prince of Orange, rushed at Van Baerle with uplifted stick ; to immediately recognise, however, that the prisoner's sole concern was to safeguard his flower-pot—compared with which his head was evidently of small account. With might and main Gryphus then struggled to get hold of the pot.

"Ah," cried the furious gaoler, "this is flat mutiny."

"Let me have my tulip !" cried Van Baerle.

"Tulip, of course," replied the old man. "We are all up to prisoner's dodges."

"But I swear to you——"

"Let go !" cried Gryphus, stamping his foot. "Let go, or I call the guard."

"Call any one you like, but you shall only have this poor flower with my life."

Infuriated, Gryphus dug again with his fingers in the earth, and this time drew forth the perfectly black bulb. Van Baerle, happily imagining he had saved the jug with its contents, never dreamed his enemy was in possession of the treasure, when suddenly Gryphus flung crashing on the flags the poor bulb, which disappeared, crunched out of existence under the gaoler's great heavy boot.

Van Baerle saw the massacre and the moist stain on the ground where his bulb had been, and the cause of Gryphus's savage exultation flashing upon him, he uttered a cry of despair that might have melted even the heart of the murderous gaoler who killed Pellisson's spider a few years before this date.

To slay such a fiend was the one thought that rushed with lightning rapidity through the tulip-fancier's brain. Blinded with boiling blood and rage, he lifted the pitcher, heavy as it was with soil, in both hands—another moment, and he would have brought it down with all his strength on the old man's bald head. A cry stopped him—a cry of unutterable anguish that came from the little barred opening in the door. Cornelius turned, and saw Rosa. The pitcher fell from his hands, and broke into a thousand bits. The daughter had saved her father from her lover's fury.

Then the old man grasped the danger he had been in, and burst out with a torrent of virulent abuse.

"You must be a mean and despicable fellow," retorted Cornelius, "to steal from a prisoner his one pleasure—a tulip bulb."

"Father, you should be ashamed," Rosa interposed; "you don't know what a wicked thing you have done!"

"Ah, is that you, you chattering fool?" the old man cried, turning his anger upon his daughter. "Mind your own business, and go downstairs at once."

"Was ever such ill-luck!" moaned Cornelius, in despair.

"Really, after all, it was only a tulip," Gryphus said, with a certain sense of shame. "I can give you as many tulips as you like, for there are three hundred of them in my loft."

"To the devil with your tulips!" cried Cornelius. "They are worth about as much as you, and that's no great value. If I had a hundred thousand millions of them, I would give them you all for the one you have destroyed."

"Ha!" exclaimed Gryphus, triumphantly. "Now we've got the secret! Of course there was some satanic hoax in this sham bulb, some plot between you and the enemies of his Highness, who spared your life. I was quite right in declaring your head should have been cut off."

"Father, father!" cried Rosa.

"Well, well, thank Heaven, I've destroyed it! thank Heaven, I've destroyed it! I shall do the same again, if necessary. Didn't I warn you, my fine friend, that I'd make your life a burden to you?"

"A curse on you! exclaimed Cornelius, in the depths of despair, as he fingered regretfully the last traces of his bulb, on which had been centred so much joy and hope.

"We will plant the other to-morrow, dear Mynheer," said Rosa, quietly, realising as she did the overwhelming sorrow of the tulip-lover, and sprinkling, in the goodness of her heart, the balm of those gentle words to soothe the aching wound of Cornelius.

CHAPTER XVIII

ROSA'S LOVER

ROSA had scarcely spoken these consoling words to Cornelius when a voice on the staircase was heard asking Gryphus what all the noise was about.

"Do you hear, father?" said Rosa.

"What?"

"Master Jacob is calling you. Something has disturbed him."

"No wonder! Did anybody ever hear such a commotion?" said Gryphus. "I thought the learned doctor was going to kill me. That is the sort of trouble we always have with these fellows. Lead the way, my girl!" and he pointed with his finger to the staircase. Then, shutting the door after him, he called out, "I am just coming to you, friend Jacob."

Poor Cornelius, left in solitude and bitter grief, murmured:

"It is I you have killed, murderer that you are. Why should I live any longer?"

The wretched prisoner would, without fail, have quite broken down had not Providence sent a counterpoise to his grief in the form of Rosa. She came to see him again that evening. And her first words were to the effect that her father would not interfere any more with whatever flowers Cornelius might fancy to grow.

"And how do you know that?" asked Cornelius incredulously.

"He told me so himself."

"To make a fool of me, most likely?"

"No; he is sorry."

"Perhaps; but rather too late."

"He didn't feel it first of himself."

"Who prompted him, then?"

"You should have heard how his friend stormed at him!"

"Master Jacob? So he hasn't left you alone yet?"

"Nothing of the kind, indeed."

Her smile was such that the little cloud of jealousy darkening Cornelius's brow disappeared.

"Tell me what passed," he said.

"At supper, on being questioned by his friend, my father told the whole story of the tulip, or rather of the bulb, and his wonderful achievement in stamping it flat."

Cornelius sighed, or rather moaned.

"If you could only have seen the man at that moment! His eyes blazed so that I was afraid he would set fire to the Castle, his hair rose up on end, his fists were clenched as if he was longing to strangle my father."

"You did that?" he screamed. "You crushed the bulb?"

"Indéed, I did."

"Then you have done an infamous thing, an appalling thing! You have committed a crime!" he roared.

"My father just sat there, stupefied."

"Are you as mad as he is?" he asked at last."

"What a fine fellow this Jacob must be!" murmured Cornelius. "He must be an excellent fellow; quite an artist!"

"Certainly no one could have spoken to my father more severely. There was no mistake about it; he was absolutely in despair. Again and again he groaned, 'Crushed! the bulb crushed! My God, my God! the bulb crushed!' Then he turned round suddenly on me: 'But that was not the only one he had?' he asked."

"Did he ask that?" questioned Cornelius, pricking up his ears.

"Do you think it wasn't the only one?" said my father. "Good; we will look for the others."

"You will search for the others?" cried Jacob, catching hold of my father by the collar, but letting it go again immediately. Then, swinging round on me, he asked, "And what did the poor young fellow say?"

"I did not know what to answer; you had bidden me never to let any one suspect your great interest in the bulb. Fortunately, my father saved me out of the difficulty."

"What did he say?" he cried. "Why, he positively foamed at the mouth."

"Why shouldn't he have been furious," I broke in, "when you were so unjust and brutal?"

"What! Are you mad too? Surely it's not a fearful loss to have a bulb smashed? You can buy hundreds in the Gorcum market for a guilder."

"But not so valuable, perhaps, as that one," I thoughtlessly answered.

"What did Jacob say to that?" asked Cornelius.

"At those words his eyes seemed to shoot out a spark."

"Yes, but that wasn't all; he must have said something?"

"So, my pretty Rosa," he said in a honied voice, "you think the bulb was valuable?"

"I saw I had made a mistake."

"What in the world should I know about it?" I answered carelessly. "How should I have any knowledge of tulips? I only know—as, alas! it is our lot to live with prisoners—that any trifling amusement is of consequence to them. Poor Mynheer van Baerle was interested in this bulb. Well, I'm sure it was cruelty to take such an amusement from him."

"But the question is," said my father, "how did he get hold of this bulb? It seems to me that I ought to know that."

"I turned away my eyes to avoid my father's look, and met those of Jacob. He scrutinised me, as if he would read my very heart.

"A sign of impatience will often do duty for an answer. I shrugged my shoulders, turned my back on him, and stepped towards the door.

"But a word I heard, though it was uttered in a low voice, held me still.

"'It wouldn't be difficult,' said Jacob to my father, 'to satisfy yourself about that. Search him; and if he has other bulbs we shall find them, as there are usually three seedling-bulbs.'"

"Three!" cried Cornelius. "He said I had three bulbs!"

"It astonished me just as much as it astonishes you. I turned round. They were both so interested in what they were talking about they did not heed me.

"'But,' my father said, 'perhaps he has not got his bulbs about him.'

"'Then make him leave his cell on some excuse or other, and I will search his cell while he is away.'"

"Oh, indeed!" Cornelius exclaimed. "So your Jacob is a thief?"

"I am afraid so."

"Tell me, Rosa," Cornelius said, meditatively.

"What?"

"Did you not tell me that one day, when you had been preparing your border, this man followed you?"

"Yes."

"That he glided like a shadow behind the elder-trees?"

"Certainly."

"That he never took his eyes off your rake for a moment?"

"Not one moment."

"Rosa!" said Cornelius, and his face blanched.

"Well!"

"It was not you he was after."

"Who, then?"

"It was not you he was in love with."

"With whom, then?"

"It was my bulb he was after; my tulip he was in love with."

"Ah! yes, that's very possible."

"Would you like to be certain about it?"

"In what way?"

"Oh, it's quite an easy matter."

"Tell me."

"Go into the garden to-morrow, try to let Jacob know that you are going, as he did before, so that he may follow you; pretend to plant the bulb, then leave the garden, but watch through the door, and you will see what will happen."

"Well! And after that?"

"After that we will act accordingly."

"Ah," sighed Rosa, "you love your bulbs very dearly, Mynheer Cornelius!"

"The truth is," said the prisoner, also sighing, "that since your father crushed that ill-starred bulb, my life seems partially paralysed."

"Listen to me!" said Rosa. "Will you try something else?"

"What?"

"Will you take my father's offer?"

"What offer?"

"He offered you tulip-bulbs by hundreds."

"That's quite true."

"Accept two or three, and amongst these two or three you may be able to raise the third seedling-bulb."

"That might be successful," said Cornelius, with his brows knit, "if your father were alone; but we have to reckon with this Jacob who spies on us."

"Yes, that is true, still think how you will deprive yourself of a great amusement."

And she said these words with a smile not quite unalloyed with irony.

Cornelius considered a little. It was evident he was struggling with some most tempting allurements.

"No!" at last, he cried out with stoical courage. "No, it would be miserable weakness, folly, selfishness, to endanger the last resource we possess by chancing mischief due to rage and envy. I should be a creature unworthy of forgiveness. No! Rosa, no! To-morrow we will decide on the place where your tulip shall be planted; you will look after it according to my instructions, and as to the third bulb"—Cornelius heaved a deep sigh—"as to the third, keep it in your chest! Watch over it as the miser watches over his first or his last piece of gold, as the mother watches over her son, as the mortally wounded man over the outpouring of his blood; watch over it, Rosa! for something tells me that it will bring us happiness and prosperity! Watch over it! and if the fortress of Loewestein should be on fire, swear to me, Rosa, that instead of saving your rings, jewels, or even the beautiful golden head-dress that becomes you so well—swear, Rosa, you will save this last bulb enshrining the black tulip."

"Be quite happy about it, Mynheer Cornelius," Rosa said in a sweet voice combining sadness and awe; "rest satisfied, for to me your wishes are commands."

"And even," continued Van Baerle, growing more and more enthusiastic; "if you find you are followed, your steps watched, your conversation rousing the suspicions of your father and this horrible Jacob, whom I hate; then, then, Rosa, sacrifice me at once. I only live through you, I have only you in the world, yet I bid you for the tulip's sake sacrifice me—do not see me any more."

Rosa felt as if her heart would break; her eyes filled with tears.

"Alas!" she cried.

"What?" asked Cornelius.

"One thing is very plain."

"What is it?"

"I see"—and the girl burst out sobbing—"I see that you love tulips so much there is no room in your heart for any other love."

And she fled from the cell.

After she had gone, Cornelius passed the most wretched evening and night of his life.

Rosa was angry with him, and she was in the right. Perhaps she would not come to see him any more, and then he would know nothing of either Rosa or his tulips. How explain this contradictory character to such perfect-hearted tulip-lovers as may still be found in the world ?

We are bound to own—to our hero's shame in the estimation of all true tulip-fanciers—that of his two lost loves Cornelius felt most bitterly the loss of Rosa ; and when he fell asleep towards three o'clock in the morning, worn out with fatigue, tormented with fears, and racked with remorse—the great black tulip yielded the first place in his dreams to the sweet blue eyes of the fair Frisian

CHAPTER XIX

RIVAL CLAIMANTS TO VAN BAERLE'S HEART

BUT poor Rosa, shut up in her room, could not know of whom or of what Cornelius was dreaming.

Naturally, after what he had said, Rosa supposed the tulip to occupy more of his thoughts than she did, and yet she was mistaken. But because there was no one there to tell her she was wrong—and Van Baerle's wild words had eaten into her heart like some poisonous acid—she gave herself up to no more dreams, but sobbed bitterly. Then, being a noble girl of clear judgment and a brave heart, she seriously considered not only Van Baerle's physical and moral qualities, but his worldly position as well.

Cornelius was a scholar, was rich, or at least was so before the confiscation of his property; he was of the princely merchant classes who are prouder of their heraldic trade-mark than even the aristocracy of its armorial bearings. So, Cornelius, perhaps, found Rosa charming as an amusing companion, but if it became a question as to who was the happy object of his love, she—Rosa, the gaoler's daughter—must acknowledge as the real queen of his heart the noblest and stateliest of flowers—the tulip.

Rosa understood, accordingly, how Cornelius must prefer the black tulip to her, but that did not make her less wretched. And she resolved, during this terrible sleepless night, that she would not show herself any more at the little grated window.

But knowing his anxiety for news of his tulip, as she

was determined never again to see the man for whom she felt her pity passing the bounds of sympathy and rapidly merging into love, she was equally resolved, in order that he should not be quite driven to despair, to continue alone her reading and writing. Happily she had reached the stage when the services of a master—unless his name chanced to be Cornelius van Baerle—were no longer indispensable.

So Rosa flung herself passionately into the study of poor Cornelius de Witt's Bible, on the second page of which—the first having been previously torn out—Van Baerle had written his will when expecting his execution.

"Ah!" she murmured as she re-read this will—her tears invariably flowing from her eyes when so occupied—"at that time, I did think he loved me."

Poor Rosa! here she was wrong, for never before had Van Baerle—as we confessed with embarrassment, at the moment when he had to choose between the black tulip and Rosa, to the yielding of the tulip's supremacy—never before had Van Baerle loved her so sincerely. But Rosa was ignorant of the tulip's discomfiture.

Her reading finished, she took up her pen and set herself with praiseworthy industry to the more difficult task of writing.

As she already wrote fairly legibly the day Cornelius delivered himself with such rashness, she hoped in a week's time at the latest to excel sufficiently well to send him tidings of his precious flower.

She had remembered all his instructions. For not a word he had ever spoken to her was forgotten by Rosa.

And he, for his part, rose more in love with her than ever.

The tulip was still vividly present to his mind, but no longer was he prepared to sacrifice everything else to it, even Rosa; it had come down to being merely a wonderful creation of nature and art—a glorious flower Heaven had made to adorn the bosom of Rosa.

Yet all day long a vague fear possessed him, though

his mind was strong enough to put away from him for the time being a sense of imminent danger. He followed his ordinary routine. Only from time to time, he felt, as it were, a passing sharp spasm. He trembled, and asking himself why he trembled, he remembered—said to himself: “Ah! yes, it was *that*.” And *that* was the fear that Rosa would not come again in the evening as usual.

As the evening darkened, his torture became keener and more constant, till it gripped him altogether and would not let him go. When night came, he received it with a beating and a bursting heart. He recalled his cruel words of the evening before, and asked himself accusingly how he could have bid Rosa sacrifice herself for his tulip: how he could have bid her to give up seeing him, if need were, when the sight of Rosa had become to him—life itself.

In Cornelius's cell the hours could be heard striking from the prison clock. Seven, eight, nine sounded. Never vibrated metallic tone more deeply than that nine in Van Baerle's heart. Then all was silent again. Cornelius pressed his hand to his side to still the throbbing of his blood and listened.

Rosa's footstep and the rustling of her gown on the staircase were so familiar to him that at her first step on the stairs he would exclaim, “Ah! here is Rosa coming.”

This evening not a sound broke the silence outside; the clock struck the quarter, the half-hour; then three-quarters of an hour past nine, then at last its solemn tones announced not only to the inmates of the prison, but to all the inhabitants of Loewestein that it was ten.

This was the hour Rosa generally left Cornelius. The hour had sounded and she had not yet come. His premonitions had not played him false. Rosa was angry and purposed staying in her own room and had given him up.

“I quite deserve it,” said Cornelius. “She will not come and she is quite right not to come. I should do just the same if I were her.”

For all that, Cornelius listened and waited, still hoping. He waited and listened till midnight, but then he gave up hope and, dressed as he was, threw himself on his bed.

The melancholy night seemed as if it would never end; when day came, it brought the prisoner but little hope.

At eight o'clock in the morning, his door opened, but Cornelius did not even turn his head. He had heard Gryphus's heavy footfall, but he was well aware that no one accompanied him. He never so much as looked in the gaoler's direction. Yet he was eager to question him for news of Rosa. Indeed he could hardly resist asking, strange as such a question would have seemed to Gryphus. He almost hoped in his egoism the gaoler would answer that his daughter was ill.

Except on rare occasions, Rosa never came during the day. So Cornelius did not really expect her as long as it was daylight. Still it was evident he must have had some half unconscious hope, judging by his sudden starts, his ear on the alert, his quick glances at the grated opening—that Rosa would break through her usual custom.

At the second visit of Gryphus, Cornelius did what he rarely did; he asked, with his sweetest voice, after the old gaoler's health. Gryphus replied gruffly:

"Oh, I'm well enough."

At his third visit, Cornelius questioned him after this fashion:

"Is anybody ill at Loewestein?"

"Nobody!" was the still briefer reply of Gryphus shutting the door in his prisoner's face.

Gryphus, quite unaccustomed to such civilities from Van Baerle, suspected he was thinking of bribing him. It was seven o'clock in the evening and Cornelius was again alone. Then all the sufferings of the evening before were renewed with an intensity beyond words. But, as on the evening before, the hours passed without the bright vision irradiating the little opening of Co-

nelius's cell—the vision which left behind it a light that brightened all the interval till it returned again.

Van Baerle's night was an abyss of despair. Next day Gryphus was more forbidding, more brutal, more discouraging than ever : and it occurred to Cornelius—the wish, perhaps, being father to the thought—that the gaoler had forbidden his daughter's visits.

He was seized with a longing to throttle the old man, but were he to do so, both divine and human laws would for ever separate him and Rosa. So Gryphus escaped without a suspicion of the danger he had run.

Once more it was evening, and Van Baerle's despair changed into the profoundest melancholy, for the remembrance of his poor tulip embittered his grief yet further. It was the month of April, which expert gardeners have selected as the most auspicious month for the planting of tulips. He had told Rosa : “ I will let you know the precise day for laying the bulb in the ground.” The evening of the following day was the time he had contemplated as the best. The weather was fine ; though the air was still a little damp, it was beginning to be warmed by the mild, April sun. What should he do if Rosa let the time for planting go by ? if to the grief of not seeing her was further added the destruction of the bulb from having been planted too late, or even from not having been planted at all !

So great became Van Baerle's distress, that, on the fourth day, he could neither eat nor drink. It was pitiful to see him, dumb with anguish, and white with despair, leaning out of his barred window at the risk of not being able to withdraw his head from between the bars—endeavouring to scan the little garden, on the left, which Rosa had told him of. Its parapet, she had said, overlooked the river ; and there he leaned—praying almost that he might see in the soft rays of the April sun the girl or the tulip, his two lost treasures.

That evening Gryphus carried away Van Baerle's breakfast and dinner, both untasted. The day following, he ate nothing either : he had remained in bed all day.

"Good!" said Gryphus, as he went down after his last visit. "I think we shall soon be rid of our scholar."

Rosa shivered.

"Pooh!" said Jacob; "why should that be?"

"He neither eats nor drinks, and won't even get up from his bed. I expect he will go off like Mynheer Grotius, in a box—only it will be a coffin this time."

Rosa turned as pale as death. "Ah!" she murmured to herself in her distress: "he is pining for his tulip."

Heavy-hearted, she went to her room, and, taking pen and paper, spent the night tracing letters.

The next morning, when Cornelius rose to drag himself to the window, he saw a slip of paper which had been pushed under his door. Seizing it and tearing it open, he read—in writing he scarcely recognised as Rosa's, it had so greatly improved during the seven days:

"Be happy, your tulip is doing excellently."

Though these few words of Rosa's comforted Cornelius a little, he fully felt the ironical sting in them. So Rosa was not ill, she was angry; she had not been prevented from coming to see him; she had deliberately kept away.

Rosa was free to do what she liked, yet her strength of will had not let her come to see him, when he had been dying almost, because he could not see her.

Cornelius had a pencil and some paper Rosa had brought him once. He felt sure the girl expected an answer, but she would only come to seek it in the night. He therefore wrote on a similar slip of paper.

"It was not unhappiness on account of my tulip made me ill, but grief at not seeing you."

When Gryphus had gone and evening had come, he slipped the paper under the door and listened. But listen as he might, he heard no footstep, no rustle of a gown, no sound of any kind.

Only presently he caught, as it were, a breath, a caress, a whisper, through the barred door, that murmured, "To-morrow."

It was a whole week since Cornelius and Rosa had seen each other's faces.

CHAPTER XX

A WEEK OF WAITING

ON the morrow, in fact, at the usual hour, Van Baerle heard some one scratching at the little opening in the same way Rosa used to do in the happy days when they were friends.

It may be guessed Cornelius was not very distant from the door at a moment when he was looking forward to the appearance through its grating of the charming face he had not seen for so long.

Rosa, indeed, stood there with her lamp in her hand, and she could not help starting on seeing him looking so sad and pale.

"You are ill, Mynheer Cornelius?" she asked.

"Yes, in body and mind," answered Cornelius.

"I found out you were eating nothing," said Rosa, "and my father told me you were keeping to your bed; so I wrote to try and set your mind at rest about your precious treasure."

"And I answered you. Seeing you again, dear Rosa, I suppose you received my letter."

"Yes, I received it."

"You cannot pretend this time that you don't know how to read. It is plain enough you not only read easily, but you have made wonderful progress with your writing."

"Yes, I received your letter, and I read it too. That is how I came to see if there is anything I can do to help you get well again."

"How can you help me get well again?" cried Cornelius; "have you some good news to tell me?"

As he spoke he fastened his eyes, sparkling with hope on Rosa.

Whether she did or did not understand this look, the girl answered gravely :

"I have only your tulip to talk to you about, and that I know is constantly in your thoughts."

Rosa said these words with a freezing accent, and Cornelius's heart sank.

The tulip-lover could not penetrate to what was concealed under the veil of indifference she assumed when speaking of her rival, the black tulip.

"Again and again you return to it, Rosa ! Haven't I told you that I think only of you, and I call Heaven to witness that it was only you I was pining for, you only were necessary to me, you only, by your absence robbed me of air, of day, warmth, sunlight, life."

Rosa smiled a sad little smile. "Ah !" she said "your tulip's life was in danger then."

Cornelius trembled in spite of himself, and fell into the trap, if it was meant for one.

"In danger !" he cried. "Heaven help me ! What danger ?"

Rosa looked at him with tender compassion, she felt it was beyond his power to give her the single-hearted devotion she craved, and she must accept him, foibles and all.

"Yes," she said ; "you guessed right ; my suitor, my lover, Jacob, was not after *me*."

"Who or what was he after, then ?" Cornelius asked with a show of solicitude.

"The tulip."

"Oh !" exclaimed Cornelius, turning paler at the news than he had when Rosa told him a fortnight before, in mistake, that Jacob was paying his court to her.

She saw Van Baerle's consternation, and he too divined what she was thinking.

"Forgive me, Rosa ! I know you ; I know all the goodness and honesty of your heart. But God has

given you the power of thought, judgment, strength, and capacity of motion to defend yourself. On the other hand, to my poor tulip in danger, God has denied all these."

Rosa did not argue this point, and went on :

"From the moment this man roused your suspicion, when he followed me to the garden, and I discovered he was Jacob, I felt even more suspicious of him than you. I did what you bade me, the day after that on which I saw you for the last time, and when you told me——"

Cornelius interrupted her. "Yet once more, I beg you, forgive me, Rosa!" he cried. "I was wrong in saying what I did to you. I have implored you to forgive me, and I implore you again. Will you never forgive me?"

"The next day," Rosa went on, "remembering what you had told me—to try whether cunning would not show me if this odious man was after——"

"Odious, indeed! You do hate him, don't you, Rosa?"

"Yes, I hate him," said Rosa, "for he is the cause of my torture for the last long week."

"Ah, you have suffered also? Thank you for owning to it, Rosa."

"The day after that miserable day," Rosa continued, "I went down into the garden, and approached the border where I meant to plant the bulbs. I looked carefully behind me to see whether I was followed as before."

"Well?" asked Cornelius.

"I was! the same shadow glided between the door and the wall, and disappeared behind the elder-trees."

"I suppose you pretended you didn't see it?" asked Cornelius, recalling the points of advice he had given Rosa.

"Yes, and I stooped over the border in which I was digging with a spade, as if I were planting the bulb."

"And he—he—what did he do?"

"I saw his red eyes gleaming like a tiger's through the trees."

"Ah, you see! you see!" cried Cornelius.

"The pretence finished, I came away."

"But surely only to hide yourself behind the garden door? So that you could see by the crack of the hinges or the keyhole, what he meant to do when you had left."

"He waited a moment, perhaps to make sure I was not coming back, then, stepping like a wolf, he came out of his hiding-place, drew near to the border by a roundabout way, and was at last at the spot—that is to say, he faced the place where the earth had been freshly dug. He paused with a look of unconcern, then scrutinised the garden in all directions, looking questioningly at every corner and every window of the neighbouring houses. Earth, sky, air, he examined them all, and, satisfied he was quite alone, isolated, that there was not a creature to see him—he flung himself on the border, dug with both hands in the soft earth, and lifted a portion, which he crumbled very gently between his hands to see if the bulb was there. Three times he did this, and each time more nervously and eagerly; till finally, beginning to think he was the dupe of some trickery, he quieted down the rage that possessed him. Then he took the rake, and smoothed the soil till it looked as he had found it, and he returned shamefaced and disappointed to the gate, when he resumed the innocent expression of any casual stroller."

"Oh, the miserable wretch!" groaned Cornelius, wiping the drops of sweat from his brow. "The miserable wretch! I knew what he wanted. But the bulb, Rosa; what have you done with it? Alas! 'tis already somewhat late to plant it."

"The bulb has been just six days in the ground."

"Where? How?" cried Cornelius. "Heavens, how rash of you! Where is it? In what soil is it? What aspect have you given it? Is there any possibility of its being stolen by that brute Jacob?"

"There's no chance of its being stolen, unless Jacob breaks open my bedroom door."

"Ah, it's with you, in your room, Rosa?" Cornelius asked, somewhat calmed. "But in what soil, in what vessel? You are not growing it in water like the silly women of Haarlem and Dordrecht, who think water can replace soil. As if water, which is composed of thirty-three parts of oxygen and sixty-six parts of hydrogen, could replace. . . . But what am I talking to you about, Rosa!"

"Yes; it's a little too learned for me," answered the girl, laughing. "I will content myself with telling you, to quiet your anxiety, that your bulb isn't in water."

"Ah, I breathe again!"

"It is in a good stone pot, about the size of the jug in which you planted yours. It is planted in soil composed of three parts of common mould taken from the best part of the garden, and one part road-sweepings. Oh, I've so often heard you, and that odious Jacob too, talk about what soil a tulip should have that I know as much about it as the first gardener in Haarlem!"

"Now, there only remains the aspect, Rosa."

"Just now it has the sun all day long, that is, when the sun shines. But once the bulb shows its spike above the ground, when the sun is warmer, I shall do as you did here, dear Mynheer. I shall put it outside my window to the east, from eight o'clock in the morning until eleven, and outside my west window from three to five in the afternoon."

"Capital! capital!" Cornelius exclaimed. "You are a perfect gardener, my sweet Rosa. But I fancy the culture of my tulip will occupy all your time."

"Indeed, that's true," said Rosa; "but what does it matter? Your tulip is my little daughter. I shall give just the time to it I should give to my child if I were a mother. It is only by becoming its mother," added Rosa, smiling, "I can cease to be its rival."

"Good, sweet Rosa!" murmured Cornelius, cast-

ing a glance—in which there was more of the lover than of the horticulturist—at the girl, and so consoling her a little. Then, after a short silence, during which Cornelius had sought between the bars for Rosa's fugitive hand, he said, "So the bulb has already been in the earth six days?"

"Yes; six days, Mynheer Cornelius."

"And it hasn't sprouted yet?"

"No; but I think it may to-morrow."

"Well, then, to-morrow you will bring me news of it and of yourself, won't you, Rosa? I shall be very anxious about the daughter, as you called it just now; but I am still more interested in the mother."

"To-morrow?" said Rosa, looking askance at Cornelius; "I am not sure if I can to-morrow."

"Ah, Rosa! why not to-morrow?"

"Mynheer Cornelius, I have a thousand things to do."

"Whilst I have only one."

"Yes," said Rosa, "to love your tulip."

"To love you, Rosa."

She shook her head. There was a short silence.

"Well," said Van Baerle at last, "everything changes in nature. To the spring-flowers succeed other flowers; and the bees, which tenderly caressed violets and wall-flowers, make love afterwards to honey-suckles, roses, jessamines, chrysanthemums and geraniums."

"What do you mean?" asked Rosa.

"I mean, Rosa, that you once cared to hear me speak of my hopes and disappointments; you tended the flower of our mutual youth; but mine has sunk into darkness. The garden of a prisoner's hopes and pleasures has but one season. It is not like those beautiful gardens with ample air and sun. Once the harvest of May is over, the spoils gathered, the bees—like you, Rosa, the bees, in their fine array, with golden antennae and diaphanous wings—glide away between the bars leaving cold and solitude and sadness, to seek elsewhere warmth and fragrancy—in short, happiness."

Rosa looked at Cornelius with a smile that escaped

him ; his eyes were raised aloft in resignation. Sighing, he continued :

" You have forsaken me, Rosa, in search of four seasons of pleasure. You have done rightly ; I do not complain ; what right have I to ask for your faithfulness ? "

" My faithfulness ! " cried Rosa, in tears, and not caring to conceal them any longer from Cornelius. " I have not been faithful to you ! "

" Is it faithful to desert me, and leave me here to die ? "

" But, Mynheer Cornelius, am I not doing everything I can to please you ? My whole soul is given up to the tending of your tulip. "

" Cruel Rosa ! You throw in my teeth the one innocent pleasure of my life ! "

" I have nothing to reproach you with, Mynheer Cornelius, unless with the terrible grief I felt when they came to tell me you were going to be put to death at the Buytenhof. "

" You are hurt, Rosa dear, because I love flowers ? "

" I am not hurt because you love flowers, Mynheer Cornelius, only because you love them far more than you love me. "

" Rosa, my best beloved ! " cried Cornelius ; " see how my hands tremble, look at my face, and feel how my heart beats wildly ! Do you suppose I am moved so sorely for love of my black tulip ? It is your smile, and your sweet face, and because I cannot help thinking your hands are yearning for mine, though you will snatch them from me, and because I feel the exquisite glow of your presence, Rosa, on the other side of these hateful bars. My darling, crush the black-tulip bulb, stamp out its life and the light of the innocent dream I have slept with and waked with, if you will ! Take every gorgeous blossom, every lovely and divine flower ; for you, Rosa, jealous Rosa, are the divinest flower of them all ! But don't rob me of your voice, or smile, the sound of your step on the stone staircase, the

light of your eyes in this dark passage, or the trust in your love ! Love me, Rosa, for I am sure I love only you."

"Next after the black tulip ! " she said, and her warm, tender hands were no longer beyond the reach of Cornelius's lips.

"Above and beyond everything, Rosa."

"I suppose I must believe you."

"As you believe in Heaven."

"Be it so. Loving me won't do you much harm."

"Oh no, dear Rosa ; but my love binds you."

"Binds me ? How does it bind me ? "

"First, not to marry any one."

Rosa smiled. "You are a tyrant," she said, "just like other men. You see some beauty you adore, you only think of her, only dream of her. You are condemned to death, and on your way to the scaffold you consecrate your last sigh to her ; and now you expect me, a poor gaoler's daughter, to give up every dream, every ambition, for you."

"But what beauty are you talking about, Rosa ? " Trying to recall some one Rosa could be alluding to.

"A dark beauty, Mynheer, with a dainty waist, slender feet, and a noble head."

Cornelius smiled. "Ah ! you mean my tulip. But you, you have real lovers, lovers of flesh and blood. To say nothing of your admirer, or rather my admirer, Jacob. You cannot have forgotten, Rosa, all you told me about The Hague students, Officers, and clerks. Well, are there no clerks, Officers, and students at Loewestein ? "

"Indeed, yes, more than enough."

"Who write letters ? "

"Who write letters."

"And now you know how to read them."

Cornelius groaned as he thought how it was owing to him—and he a wretched prisoner—Rosa could now read her love-letters.

"As to that," said Rosa, "I think, after all, I am only

following your instructions in reading their letters and criticising my various admirers."

"How? my instructions?"

"Yes," continued Rosa. "Do you forget the will you wrote down in Mynheer de Witt's Bible? I don't forget it because I know how to read now. I read it once, if not twice, every day. Well, in this will you tell me to love and marry a handsome young man of from twenty-six to twenty-eight. I am looking for the said young man, and as all day is taken up with attending to your tulip, you must let me have my evenings to go and find him."

"But Rosa, the will was in the event of my death, and, thank Heaven, I am alive."

"Very well, then, I will give up looking for the young man, and will come and see you."

"Oh yes! Rosa, don't fail to come!"

"On one condition."

"I grant it beforehand!"

"That for three days you will not speak of the black tulip."

"I will never speak of it again, if you like."

"Oh, it won't do to ask for what is quite impossible."

Saying this, she brought her pretty, fresh cheek, seemingly by pure accident, so near the grating that Cornelius found himself able to touch it with his lips.

Rosa gave a little cry, half of alarm, half of pleasure, and vanished.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SECOND BULB

THE night was a happy one for the prisoner, and the next day was still happier. The prison during the past few days had been gloomy, depressing, and its atmosphere leaden. Its walls were black, its air icy, and the barred windows admitted scarce a gleam of daylight.

But when Cornelius woke, a morning sunbeam was playing about the bars, pigeons were hovering near or cooing softly on the gable above the window, which was still closed.

Cornelius ran to the window and opened it; he fancied that life, joy, possibly even liberty, were entering with this sunbeam.

Love had blossomed, and gave beauty to everything about him; love, the flower of heaven, more radiant and of greater sweetness than any earthly power.

When Gryphus came into the prisoner's room, instead of finding him dejected and still in bed as on the previous days, he was up and singing an operatic air.

"Halloa!" exclaimed Gryphus, as he looked at him askance.

"And how are you doing, Gryphus?"

Again Gryphus did not face him.

"How's the dog, and Jacob, and the beautiful Rosa?"

Gryphus ground his teeth. "There's your breakfast," he said.

"Thanks, friend Cerberus; I shall be glad of it, for I'm very hungry."

"Ah! you are hungry?"

"Certainly; don't you think I ought to be?"

"The conspiracy is succeeding, then," said Gryphus.

"What conspiracy?"

"Well, I know what I know. But we are watching you, Mynheer Scholar; you may rest assured of that; we are watching you."

"Watch, by all means, friend Gryphus. Both I and my conspiracy are at your service."

"We shall know all about it at midday," retorted the gaoler, leaving the cell.

"At midday?" repeated Cornelius; "what in the world does he mean? Well, we shall see soon enough."

Cornelius found little difficulty in waiting till noon, seeing nine in the evening was the hour he was really looking forward to.

Twelve struck, and Gryphus was not only punctual as usual, but the steps of three or four soldiers were also heard ascending the stairs with him.

The door opened, Gryphus entered, and bringing in the men shut the door behind them.

"There he is! Search him!" cried the gaoler.

They searched Cornelius's pockets, his coat, waistcoat, shirt, and stripped him, but found nothing.

They hunted amongst his sheets and mattresses, and found nothing.

Cornelius congratulated himself he had not taken the third bulb. Gryphus would most certainly have discovered it in this search, wherever it had been hidden, and would have trampled it into pulp as he did the other.

No prisoner ever sat by with a more placid face while his cell was being searched.

Gryphus finally retreated with the pencil, and three or four sheets of white paper, which Rosa had given Cornelius—the sole trophy of the expedition.

At six o'clock Gryphus returned; but alone. Cornelius tried to make peace with him, but Gryphus growled, showing a great tooth like a tusk in the corner

of his mouth, and left the cell backwards, as if he were afraid of being flung out of it.

Cornelius burst out laughing.

This made Gryphus, who had a better acquaintance with authors than he cared for, call to him through the grating :

“Laugh if you like ; but let him laugh last that wins !”

Cornelius did laugh to win that night, at any rate ; for at nine Rosa came. She brought no lantern, not needing any light now she knew how to read.

The light, too, might betray her, as Jacob was now constantly spying after her. Moreover, by the light, Rosa's blushes would be seen, for Rosa knew she would have occasion to blush.

What did the young lovers talk of that evening ?

They talked as lovers talk on the threshold of a door in France, from the opposite sides of a balcony in Spain, from a terrace above to an orange-grove below in the East. They talked of matters that give wings to the hours and feathers to the pinions of time.

They spoke of everything except of the black tulip.

Then when ten came, they parted as usual.

Cornelius was happy, as absolutely happy as a tulip-fancier can be, who has not heard a word said about his hobby.

Rosa was as sweet, he thought, as girl could be. She was good and kind and charming. But why had she forbidden him to speak of the tulip ? Yes, it was a great blemish in Rosa's character. Cornelius, sighing, confessed to himself that a woman can never be perfect. Half the night he reasoned with himself over this imperfection, and as long as he was awake he thought of Rosa.

Once asleep, he dreamed of her. But the Rosa of his dreams was far more perfect than the Rosa of real life. She not only talked of tulips, but she had brought Cornelius a superb black tulip in a beautiful Chinese vase.

Cornelius woke, trembling with joy, and murmuring, "Rosa, Rosa, I love you."

And as it was now daylight, Cornelius did not feel inclined to go to sleep again. All day the same thought with which he had awakened haunted him.

Ah, if only Rosa had spoken lovingly of the tulip, Cornelius would have idolised her as even a rarer and diviner woman than Semiramis, Cleopatra, Queen Elizabeth, or Anne of Austria, the greatest and most beautiful queens of the world.

But Rosa had forbidden him—if he wished to see her again—to speak of tulips for three whole days.

Those seventy-two hours were allowed the lover it is true, but those seventy-two hours were denied to the horticulturist. Thirty-six of these hours had, fortunately, gone by. The other thirty-six would pass quickly—eighteen in waiting for Rosa, and eighteen in remembering her.

Rosa came back at her hour, and Cornelius bore his penance heroically. He would have made a distinguished Pythagorean; for, had he only been allowed to ask after his tulip once a day, he would have gladly passed five years—according to the rules of the order—in silence.

His lovely visitor, however, recognised the necessity for balancing favours against denials. And Rosa let Cornelius draw her hands and kiss her hair through the barred opening. Poor child! she little thought these lover's follies were more fatal for her than the discussion of tulips. She realised it, perhaps, a little, however, when she returned to her room with a beating heart, flushed cheeks, burning lips, and liquid eyes.

And the following evening, after their first greetings and endearments, she looked through the grating with the sort of look that is felt if not seen, and said:

"Well, she is up!"

"'She is up!' Who? What?" Cornelius said, never dreaming that Rosa would of herself shorten the length of his penance.

"Your tulip."

"What! You will let me, then?"

"Oh yes!" said Rosa, with all a mother's tenderness in pleasuring a child.

"Ah, Rosa!" said Cornelius, leaning forward to touch with his lips, if possible, her cheek, her hand, or her forehead—any the least part of her. But he had better luck than he expected, for his lips met hers.

Rosa gave a little scream. Cornelius was wise enough to perceive he must distract her by talking to her, for Rosa was a little fluttered.

"Is it rising straight?" he asked.

"Straight as a rocket."

"And fairly high?"

"Two inches, at least."

"Oh, Rosa, take the greatest care of it, and you will see how quickly it will grow."

"Could I take more care of it? I think of nothing else."

"Of nothing but it, Rosa? Take care, or I shall be jealous next."

"And you know quite well that to think of it is to think of you. I never lose sight of it. I see it from my bed when I wake; and when I fall asleep, it is the last thing I lose sight of. During the day I sit and work beside it, for I never leave my room now it is there."

"You are right, Rosa; you know 'tis your marriage-portion?"

"Yes, indeed; and by means of it I shall be able to marry a young fellow from twenty-six to twenty-eight whom I love."

"Hold your tongue, cruel girl!"

Cornelius tried to grasp her fingers, and so, if the conversation did not change, at least silence followed.

That evening Cornelius was the happiest of men. Rosa yielded him her hand as long as he wished to hold it, and he talked "tulip" to his heart's content.

Every day brought progress in the tulip's growth and in the love of the young pair. Now it was the

leaves had opened ; then, another time, the flower had formed.

Cornelius's joy at this news was extravagant, and he poured out question on question.

"Formed ! It is formed ?"

"Yes, it is really formed."

Cornelius staggered with delight, and was obliged to support himself by the little barred opening.

"Ah, Heaven !" he exclaimed. "Is the oval perfect ?" he asked, recovering himself, and turning to Rosa ; "the cylinder full ? are the points very green ?"

"The oval is nearly an inch long and tapers like a needle, the cylinder is swelling its sides, the points are on the verge of opening."

That night Cornelius slept little ; the supreme moment had arrived when the points would open themselves out.

Two days after, Rosa announced that they had actually opened.

"Opened, Rosa ?" cried Cornelius. "The involucre is open ? Then you can see already !" And the prisoner stopped, breathless.

"Yes," answered Rosa ; "it is just possible to distinguish the slightest thread of colour, as fine as a hair."

"And its colour ?" asked Cornelius, quivering with excitement.

"Ah ! it is very dark."

"Brown ?"

"Oh, darker !"

"'Darker,' dear Rosa, darker ! Dark as ebony dark as——"

"The ink I wrote to you with."

Cornelius shouted with delight. Then, suddenly stopping, he said, with clasped hands :

"Oh, Rosa, there is no angel to be compared with you !"

"Really !" said Rosa, amused at his delirious joy.

"Rosa, you have done so much for it ; you have

worn yourself out for me. Rosa, my tulip is really going to bloom, and its blossom will be black. Rosa, Rosa, you are the most perfect creature God has ever created ! ”

“ After the tulip, you mean.”

“ Be quiet, child. For pity’s sake, do not spoil my joy. But tell me, Rosa, as your tulip is so near blooming, it only needs two or three more days to be in perfect flower ? ”

“ To-morrow or the day after, probably.”

“ And I shall not see it ! ” cried Cornelius, starting back. “ And I shall not be able to kiss it—as one of God’s wonders to be almost adored !—as I kiss your hands, Rosa, your hair, or your cheeks, when by chance they are happily near the bars.”

Rosa let her cheek touch the bars—not by chance. And Cornelius kissed her fervently.

“ I can pick it, if you wish,” said Rosa.

“ Oh no, no ! As soon as it is open, put it in the shade, and that very moment—that very moment send to Haarlem and inform the President of the Horticultural Society that the grand black tulip is in flower. Haarlem is far off, I know, but money will find you a messenger. Have you any money, Rosa ? ”

Rosa smiled. “ Oh yes ! ” she said.

“ Enough ? ”

“ I have three hundred guilders.”

“ Oh ! if you have three hundred guilders, you must not send a messenger, Rosa. You must go yourself.”

“ But what will become of the flower——”

“ Oh ! the flower, you must take it with you. You understand, you must never leave it for a single moment.”

“ But if I am never to leave it, I must leave you, Mynheer Cornelius,” said Rosa, wistfully.

“ Yes, that’s true, my own sweet Rosa. Heavens ! how wicked men are ! What have I done to them to be deprived of liberty ! You are right, Rosa ; I cannot live without you. So you must send some one to Haarlem, certainly. And yet, the miracle is such that

really the President himself should see about it. I believe he would come himself to Loewestein to fetch the tulip." Then suddenly he paused, and said in a trembling voice, "Rosa! Rosa! if it should not be black, after all!"

"You will know that to-morrow or the day after!"

"And to have to wait till the evening to know it! I should die with impatience. Couldn't we agree on a signal, Rosa?"

"I will do better than that."

"What will you do?"

"If it opens in the night, I will come and tell you myself. If it opens by day, I will go past your door, and as I pass I will slip in a little note either under the door or through the grating, some time or other between my father's first and second visit."

"Oh! Rosa, that will be the very thing! A line from you telling me the good news."

"There's ten o'clock, I must be off now."

"Yes, yes!" said Cornelius. "Go, Rosa; go!"

Rosa went away sad at heart. Cornelius had as good as sent her away. It is true it was to watch over the black tulip.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BLACK TULIP FLOWERS

IT was a pleasant and yet an anxious night that Cornelius passed. Every moment he fancied that Rosa's sweet voice was calling him ; he would then start up, go to the door and put his eyes to the grating ; but no one was there, and the corridor was empty.

Rosa, no doubt, was keeping watch also, but a happier vigil than his ; for she was watching over the tulip, and had before her eyes that glorious flower—that marvel of marvels—not only unknown till now, but deemed impossible. What would people say when they knew that the black tulip was found, that it did exist, and that its discoverer was the prisoner Van Baerle ? Had he been offered liberty in exchange for his tulip, Cornelius would have spurned the offer.

Day came without news ; the tulip had not yet flowered. The day passed and was succeeded by night ; and with the night came Rosa again—Rosa blithe and cheerful as a bird.

“ Well ? ” asked Cornelius.

“ All is going excellently ; the tulip is sure to flower to-night.”

“ And will its flower be black without a single speck of any other colour ? ”

“ Jet black, without a speck.”

“ Thank Heaven ! Ah, Rosa, I dreamt last night, of you chiefly ”—here Rosa gave a little gesture of incredulity—“ and then of what course we ought to take.”

“ What must we do ? ”

"Well, I will tell you what I have arranged. When the tulip is in flower, and we have established the fact that it is absolutely and completely black, you must find a messenger."

"Oh, that's easy enough! I have a messenger ready at hand."

"A trusty man?"

"A man for whom I can answer—one of my lovers."

"Not Jacob, I hope?"

"Oh no! don't be alarmed; the one I mean is the Loewestein ferryman, a smart fellow of twenty-five or so."

"Bless me! why——"

"Now, don't you be uneasy," said Rosa, smiling; "he is still under the age, which you yourself fixed at twenty-six to twenty-eight."

"Well, then, you think you can rely upon him?"

"As I could upon myself; he would plunge from his boat into the Waal or the Meuse to please me, if I so bade him."

"Listen, then. In ten hours' time this young fellow can get to Haarlem; you must get me paper and pencil—or, better, pen and ink; then I will write; or perhaps you had better write; for as I am a prisoner, people might suspect (as your father suspects) some conspiracy in the matter. So you must write to the President of the Horticultural Society, and the President, I am sure, will come."

"But what if he does not come at once?"

"Suppose that he delays one day or even two—though the supposition is impossible, for a lover of tulips such as he will not delay an hour, a minute, or a second in hastening to see the eighth wonder of the world. But suppose, as I said, that he lets one day pass, or even two, the tulip would still be in its full splendour. And then, when it has been viewed by the President and the certified statement has been drawn up by him, everything is correct; you keep a copy of the certificate and hand over the tulip to him. Ah! Rosa, Rosa, if we

had been able to take it ourselves, it should never have left my hands, except to pass into yours. But that is a dream we may not think of"; and Cornelius sighed. "Other eyes than ours will see it reach and pass its bloom. But, Rosa—and this is most important—let no one see it until the President has inspected it. The black tulip—great Heaven!—if any one saw the black tulip, it would be stolen."

"Stolen!"

"Yes; did you not yourself tell me the fears you felt in regard to your lover Jacob? People steal one florin readily enough, and why shouldn't they steal a hundred thousand?"

"I will keep watch, you may be sure."

"Suppose it were to open while you are here?"

"Just the sort of trick the provoking thing would be likely to play!" said Rosa.

"Suppose, when you get back, you were to find it open?"

"What then?"

"Directly it opens, remember, Rosa, that not a moment must be lost in sending word to the President."

"Yes, and sending word to you too; I understand." So saying, Rosa sighed—not bitterly, but like a woman who begins to understand a man's pet weakness, and even to put up with it. "Very well, Mynheer Van Baerle," she added, "I will go back to your tulip; as soon as ever it opens you shall be informed, and then the messenger shall start at once."

"Rosa, to what marvel of heaven or earth can I compare you?"

"Compare me to the tulip, Mynheer; and I shall indeed be flattered, I vow I shall. And now, good-bye for the present, Mynheer Cornelius."

"But why 'Mynheer.' Why not 'friend'?"

"Well then, 'friend,'" said Rosa, somewhat soothed.

"*Dear* friend—say the word, Rosa; *dear*, nay *very dear*—surely that is so?"

“ ‘Dear friend ; yes, very dear,’ ” repeated the girl, as her heart throbbed wildly with joy.

“ And now, Rosa, that you have said ‘very dear,’ say also ‘happy’—ay, happy and blessed as never was man before. One thing more only I want, Rosa.”

“ What is that ? ”

“ Your cheek—your fresh, pink, soft cheek. Yes, Rosa, of your own free-will and not this time by surprise or accident. Ah ! ”

The prisoner ended his prayer with a sigh of rapture ; he had touched the girl’s lips, and not by surprise or accident, as a hundred years later Saint-Preux was to touch Julie’s.

Then Rosa fled away, while Cornelius remained—his soul still hanging on her lips, his face pressed close to the grating. Well-nigh breathless with joy and happiness, he opened his window and with swelling heart gazed upon the cloudless azure of the sky and the silvery light of the moon falling on the double river which flowed on beyond the hills. His lungs inhaled the rich pure air ; his mind was full of pleasing thoughts, his soul of gratitude and religious veneration.

“ Ah ! yes, Thou art always above us, my God,” he exclaimed, as his eyes strained towards the stars ; “ forgive me because I had almost doubted of Thee in these last days, when Thou didst hide Thyself behind the clouds and I for a moment ceased to see Thee, kind and merciful God eternal ! But to-day—this evening, this night—I see Thee clear mirrored in Thy skies, and mirrored in my heart.”

The sick man was healed, the prisoner was free !

For a part of that night Cornelius remained by his barred window, both eyes and ears on the alert and strained to the utmost attention. Now and again, turning his eyes towards the corridor, he would say softly to himself—“ Yonder is Rosa, keeping watch as I do, waiting anxiously as each minute passes. And there, beneath Rosa’s eyes, is the mystic flower—living, expanding, opening : at this moment perhaps Rosa’s

warm delicate fingers are holding the tulip's stem—(ah ! touch it gently, Rosa.) Or perchance her lips are on its opening bud—(carefully, Rosa, carefully, for your lips can burn !): and so it may be that the two creatures I love are at this moment caressing each other beneath the eye of God."

Just then in the southern sky a star blazed out, and shooting across the heavens, seemed to fall on the fortress of Loewestein. "Ah ! see !" cried Cornelius with thrilling heart, "God sends my flower a soul !"

And lo ! as though to confirm his intuition, the prisoner heard in the passage light, sylph-like steps and the rustling of a gown—as it were the sound of wings—and a familiar voice which said to him :

"Cornelius, dear friend, very dear and very happy, quick, quick, come here !"

Cornelius sprang from his window to the door ; once again his lips met Rosa's lips, and in her kiss she said :

"It is open, it is black ! . . . see here it is !"

"What ! you have it here !" he cried, as his lips left hers.

"Yes, indeed I have : one must run a little risk to give a great joy. See here, take it !"

And with one hand the girl held up to the grating a dark lantern which she had now lit, while with the other she held up the wondrous tulip. Cornelius gave one cry and almost swooned away.

"Ah ! my God !" he murmured ; "richly Thou dost compensate me for my innocence and my misfortunes, for Thou hast caused these two flowers to bloom in my prison cell !"

"Kiss it," said Rosa ; "I kissed it too just now."

And Cornelius, holding his breath, just touched with his lips the point of the flower ; never surely did any kiss imprinted on a woman's lips—even the lips of Rosa—enter deeper into his heart.

Beautiful, indeed, and glorious was the tulip ; with a stem more than eighteen inches high, it shot out from amid four green leaves smooth and straight as lance

heads ; its flower was all black and shining like jet.

"Rosa," Cornelius gasped out, "Rosa, not a moment must be lost in writing the letter."

"The letter is written, dearest Cornelius," said she.

"Written ! how do you mean ? "

"Yes, while the tulip was opening I was writing ; I didn't want to waste a moment. Here is the letter ; tell me if it will do."

Cornelius took the letter and read—in a handwriting vastly improved since the first little note Rosa had sent him—these words :

"MYNHEER PRESIDENT,—

"The black tulip will have opened within perhaps ten minutes' time. As soon as this happens, I will send you a messenger begging you to come in person and fetch it from the fortress of Loewestein. I am the daughter of the gaoler, Gryphus, and I am almost as much a prisoner as the poor men under my father's keeping. So I cannot myself bring you this wonderful flower. This is why I implore you to come here and fetch it yourself.

"I wish the tulip to be called *Rosa Barlœensis*. It is just opening and is perfectly black.

"I have the honour to be,

"Your humble servant,

"ROSA GRYPHUS "

"That's right ! that's right ! dear Rosa. The letter is just what it should be. I could never have written it so clearly, myself. You will give the Committee all the information they require. They will then know how the tulip has been produced, the care, the anxiety, the watchfulness it has needed. But now, Rosa, there is not a moment to lose. The messenger must be found ! the messenger ! "

"What is the President's name ? "

"Give it me and I will address it. Oh ! he is very

well-known : Mynheer van Systens, Burgomaster of Haarlem. Give it me, Rosa ; give it me."

And with a shaking hand Cornelius wrote the address :

"To Mynheer Peter van Systens, Burgomaster and President of the Horticultural Society of Haarlem."

"And now go, Rosa ; go," said Cornelius ; "and may God watch over us as He has in His goodness watched over us till now."

CHAPTER XXIII

MACHINATIONS

INDEED, the poor young people were in sore need of the protection of Heaven. Never had they been so near disaster as now at the very moment when they had hoped their happiness was assured.

We have no doubt that our intelligent reader has recognised in Jacob an old friend, or rather an old enemy, Isaac Boxtel. Our reader has guessed, then, that Boxtel had followed from the Buytenhof to Loewestein the object of his desire and the object of his hatred—the Black Tulip and Cornelius Van Baerle.

Envy had made Boxtel, if not discover, at least guess, what no one but a tulip-fancier—and an envious one—could ever have discovered, namely, the existence of the bulbs and the prisoner's ambitions.

We have seen how more fortunate as Jacob than as Isaac, he had struck up an acquaintance with Gryphus, whose hospitality and gratitude he had cultivated for several months with the help of the best gin ever manufactured from the Texel to Antwerp. He lulled to rest his suspicions ; for, as we have seen, old Gryphus was suspicious ; he lulled to rest his suspicions, we repeat, by flattering him with the proposal of a marriage with Rosa. Besides this, he tickled the gaoler's vanity after having flattered the father's pride. He tickled his vanity by describing to him, in the most gloomy colours, the learned prisoner whom Gryphus held under lock and key, and who, according to the self-

styled Jacob, had made an unholy pact with Satan, for the purpose of harming the Prince of Orange.

At first he succeeded equally well with Rosa, not by inspiring her with any sentiment of sympathy—for Rosa had never cared much for Mynheer Jacob—but by talking to her of marriage and of his passionate love for her, he had lulled all possible suspicion for the time being. We have seen how his foolish obstinacy in following Rosa into the garden had revealed his true character to the girl, and how the instinctive fears of Cornelius had put the two young people on their guard against him. Our reader must remember that what had made the prisoner especially uneasy was the fact that Jacob had been so furious with Gryphus about the bulb which had been destroyed. His anger had been all the greater because Boxtel, though he suspected that Cornelius had another bulb, did not know for certain.

It was then that he began to watch Rosa, and followed her, not only in the garden, but even in the passages.

Only since he followed her at night barefooted, he was neither seen nor heard, except on the occasion when Rosa thought she saw something pass by like a shadow on the stairs.

But it was too late; Boxtel had learnt from the prisoner's own mouth the existence of a second bulb. Duped by Rosa's stratagem, when she pretended to plant a bulb in the flower-bed, and not doubting that this little comedy had been played to force him to betray himself, he redoubled his precautions, and employed all his cunning to play the spy on others without being spied himself.

He saw Rosa carry a large earthenware jar from her father's kitchen to her room; he saw her carefully wash her pretty hands, covered with earth, which she had been kneading to make the best possible mould for the tulip.

Then he hired a little attic exactly opposite Rosa's window, sufficiently far away to make it impossible for her to recognise him, but near enough for him to follow

with the help of his telescope, all that happened in the girl's room at Loewestein, as he had watched at Dordrecht all that was going on in the drying-room of Cornelius.

Before he had been three days in his garret, his doubts were removed. At sunrise every morning the earthenware jar was placed on the window-sill, and, like one of the charming damsels depicted by Van Mieris or Metzu, Rosa would appear at the window framed by the budding branches of virginia creeper and honeysuckle. Rosa looked at the earthenware jar with an expression which informed Boxel of the real value of what was contained in it, which indeed was nothing less than the second bulb, that is to say, the prisoner's last hope.

When the night threatened to be cold, Rosa brought in the jar, following the instructions of Cornelius, who was afraid the bulb might be frost-bitten. When the heat of the sun increased, Rosa brought in the pot from eleven in the morning till two in the afternoon. Yes, it was plain enough, the girl was again following Cornelius's directions, who was afraid of the soil getting overdry and parched. But when the first leaves began to appear, Boxel was quite convinced; when it was an inch high, thanks to his telescope, he had no longer any doubts on the subject. Cornelius had had two bulbs, and the second had been confided to the love and care of Rosa. For, as you may suppose, the affection of the young people had not escaped Boxel's notice.

This, then, was the second bulb; this was what he had to snatch from the care of Rosa and the anxious love of Cornelius.

But it was by no means an easy task.

Rosa watched over her tulip as a mother watches over her child, or rather as a dove broods over her eggs. She never left her room during the day; stranger still, she never left it in the evening. For a week Boxel watched Rosa in vain, she never left the room. This was during the days of their quarrel, which made Cornelius so unhappy, by preventing him from re-

ceiving news either of Rosa or the tulip. Was Rosa going to sulk for ever? That would have made the theft much more difficult than Mynheer Isaac had imagined at first. We say "the theft," since Isaac had determined to steal the tulip. And since the greatest mystery was preserved concerning its growth since the two young people had concealed its existence from every one; since he, a well-known tulip-fancier, would be believed rather than a young girl ignorant of all the niceties of horticulture, or than a prisoner condemned on a charge of high treason, guarded, watched, kept under the strictest surveillance, and unable to make good his claim from his dungeon; since, moreover, he would be the owner of the tulip (and in the case of furniture or other movables, possession is nine points of the law)—he would certainly gain the prize, would certainly be crowned instead of Cornelius, and the tulip would be called, not *Tulipa nigra Barlaeensis*, but *Tulipa nigra Buxtellensis* or *Buxtellea*. Mynheer Isaac had not yet quite decided which of these two titles to give to the black tulip; but as they both meant the same thing, this was not an important point.

The important point was to steal the tulip.

But in order that Boxel might steal the tulip, it was necessary to get Rosa out of the room. Therefore, with real joy that Jacob, or Isaac, whichever you prefer, saw that the accustomed meetings of the young people had been resumed. He began to profit by Rosa's absence to study her door. The door shut firmly, and was locked by a simple lock indeed, but one of which Rosa alone had the key.

Boxel's first idea was to steal the key; but besides the fact that it was not easy to pick a girl's pocket, Rosa, if she found that she had lost her key, would have the lock changed, and would not leave her room until this was done, and Boxel would have committed a useless crime. It was better to use some other means.

Boxel collected all the keys that he could find, and while Rosa and Cornelius were passing one of the

happy hours at the grating, he tried them all. Two fitted in the lock, and one of the two turned once, and only stopped at the second turn. This key, therefore, only needed a little alteration. Boxtel covered it with a thin coating of wax, and renewed the experiment. The obstacle which the key had met with in the second turn had left its mark on the wax. Boxtel had only to follow this mark with a file with a narrow blade like that of a knife. After two days' work, Boxtel's key was complete. Rosa's door opened silently and without effort, and Boxtel found himself in the girl's room, face to face with the tulip.

Boxtel's first crime had been when he climbed over the wall to dig up the tulip ; the second, when he made his way into the drying-room of Cornelius through an open window ; the third, when he entered Rosa's room with the help of a false key. It was envy that had made Boxtel's steps so rapid along the path of crime. Boxtel, then, found himself alone with the tulip. An ordinary thief would have put the jar under his arm and carried it off, but Boxtel was not an ordinary thief, and he reflected.

He reflected, as he looked at the tulip by the light of his dark lantern, that it was not yet advanced enough to make him certain that the flower would be black, although to all appearances this was probable. He reflected that if the flower was not black, or if it was marked in any way, his theft would be useless. He reflected that the rumour of the theft would spread, that the thief would be suspected after what had happened in the garden, that search would be made, and that, however carefully he might hide the tulip, it would always be possible to discover it.

He reflected that if he hid the tulip in such a way that it could not be found, he might, in moving it from place to place, do it some damage.

He reflected finally that, since he had the key of Rosa's room, and could enter it whenever he wished, it would be best to wait till the plant flowered, take it

an hour before or after it opened, and set out without delay to Haarlem, where, before it could be claimed the tulip would be placed before the judges. Then Boxtel could accuse of theft any one who laid claim to it. It was a well-arranged plot, quite worthy of the man who had planned it.

So every evening during that happy hour which the young people spent at the prison grating, Boxtel entered the girl's room, not to violate that virgin sanctuary but to see what progress the black tulip had made towards opening its petals.

On the evening which we have already reached, he was just entering as he had done on other evenings but, as we have seen, the young people had only exchanged a few words, and Cornelius had sent Rosa away to watch over the tulip.

When Boxtel saw Rosa going back to her room ten minutes after she had left it, he understood that the tulip had blossomed, or else was on the point of doing so. It was during that night, then, that his success or failure was really at stake; so Boxtel appeared at the house of Gryphus with double his usual supply of hollands, that is to say, with a bottle in either pocket. Gryphus drunk, Boxtel was practically master of the house. At eleven, Gryphus was blind drunk. At two o'clock in the morning, Boxtel saw Rosa leave her room, but he also saw that she held in her arm something that she was carrying very carefully. This was undoubtedly the black tulip, which had just blossomed. But what was she going to do with it? Was she going to take it straight to Haarlem? It was not possible for a girl, alone and by night, to undertake such a journey. Was she merely going to show the tulip to Cornelius? It seemed probable. He followed Rosa barefooted and on tiptoe. He saw her approach the grating. He heard her call Cornelius. By the light of the dark lantern he saw the tulip in flower black as the night which concealed him. He heard the plan arranged between Cornelius and Rosa to send

messenger to Haarlem. He saw their lips meet, then he heard Cornelius send Rosa away. He saw Rosa put out the dark lantern and make her way to her own room, which she entered. Then, ten minutes later, he saw her leave the room and carefully double-lock the door. The reason why she locked the door so carefully was because in the room behind was the black tulip.

Boxtel, who saw all this from his place of concealment on the landing of the floor above Rosa's room, came step by step down his flight of stairs as Rosa descended hers, so that as Rosa touched the last step of the stair with her light foot, Boxtel, with still lighter hand, touched the lock of Rosa's door. And in his hand, remember, was the false key which opened the door just as readily as the real one.

This is the reason why we said at the opening of the chapter that the poor young people were in sore need of the protection of Heaven.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BLACK TULIP CHANGES MASTERS

CORNELIUS remained standing on the spot where Rosa had left him, seeking for strength to bear the twofold burden of his happiness.

Half an hour slipped away. The first fresh rays of morning were peeping through the grated window of Cornelius's prison, when suddenly he was startled by the sound of footsteps on the stairs, and approaching cries.

A moment more and he was confronted by Rosa's pale and distracted face.

He started back, turning pale with fright himself.

"Cornelius, Cornelius," she panted out.

"Good Heavens! What is it?" asked the prisoner.

"Cornelius! the tulip——"

"What of it?"

"How can I tell you?"

"Speak, Rosa; speak!"

"It has been taken—stolen from us."

"Taken—stolen!" cried Cornelius.

"Yes," said Rosa, leaning against the door to save herself from falling. "Yes, taken, stolen!"

And then, in spite of herself, her limbs failed her, and she fell upon her knees.

"But how was it?" asked Cornelius. "Tell me, explain yourself."

"Oh, it was not my fault, my friend."

Poor Rosa! she no longer dared to say, "My beloved."

"You left it unguarded!" said Cornelius, mournfully.

"Only for one moment, to inform our messenger, who lives hardly fifty paces off, on the banks of the Waal."

"And during that time, notwithstanding my injunctions, you left the key in the door—unhappy child!"

"No, no, no; and what I cannot account for is that the key never left me. I held it in my hand the whole time, gripping it tightly, as though I feared it would escape me."

"But how, then, could it have happened?"

"How can I tell? I gave the letter to my messenger, he went out before me: I returned, the door was closed, everything in my room was in its place, but the tulip had disappeared. Some one must have a key for my room, or have had a false one made."

She burst into tears, and her sobs choked her.

Cornelius, motionless, with distorted features, listened almost without comprehending, only muttering:

"Stolen, stolen, stolen! I am lost!"

"Oh, Cornelius, forgive me, forgive me," cried Rosa; "it will kill me."

At Rosa's threat, Cornelius seized the grating of the window and shook it furiously.

"Rosa, Rosa," he cried, "it is true we have been robbed, but shall we allow ourselves to be cast down because of that? No, the misfortune is great, but perchance it may be reparable. Rosa, we know the thief!"

"Alas! how can I tell you positively who it was?"

"But I can tell you that it was that infamous Jacob. Shall we allow him to carry the fruit of our labour, of our vigils, the child of our love, to Haarlem? Rosa, he must be pursued and overtaken!"

"But how could we do that, my friend, without letting my father know that we were in communication with each other? And could I, a woman, not clever, and with so little freedom—how could I attain an end in which you yourself might perhaps be unable to succeed?"

"Rosa, Rosa, open this door for me, and you shall see whether I will succeed or not. You shall see whether I do not discover the thief, you shall see whether I do not make him confess his crime, you shall see whether I do not make him cry for mercy."

"Alas!" sobbed Rosa, "how can I open it for you? Have I the keys? If I had them, would you not have been free long since?"

"Your father has them, your infamous father, the murderer who has already crushed the first offshoot of my tulip. Oh, the wretch, the wretch; he is Jacob's accomplice."

"For Heaven's sake, do not speak so loud."

"Oh, Rosa, if you do not open the door," cried Cornelius, in a paroxysm of rage, "I shall force these bars and massacre every soul I find in the prison."

"For pity's sake, my friend."

"I tell you, Rosa, I will demolish the prison stone by stone"; and the unfortunate man, his strength increased tenfold by his rage, shook the door noisily, calling little that his shouts thundered up the resounding spiral staircase.

Rosa, terrified, sought vainly to quell the furious outbreak.

"I tell you I will kill the infamous Gryphus," roared Van Baerle. "I tell you I will shed his blood, as I have shed that of my black tulip."

The wretched man was going mad.

"Very well, then," Rosa gasped. "Yes, yes, you only be calm; yes, I will take his keys; yes, I will set you free; yes, only be calm, my Cornelius——"

She did not finish; a growl beside her cut short her sentence.

"Father!" cried Rosa.

"Gryphus!" roared Van Baerle. "Ah, villain!"

In the midst of all the noise, old Gryphus had come upstairs without being heard by them.

He seized his daughter roughly by the wrist.

"Ah, you would take my keys!" said he, in a voice

choked with anger. "Ah, this base wretch, this monster, this gallows-bird of a conspirator, is your Cornelius! Ah, so we have intrigues with State prisoners, have we? That is mighty well."

Rosa wrung her hands in despair.

"So," continued Gryphus, passing from the feverish accents of rage to the cold irony of the victor. "So, innocent Master Tulip-fancier, so, gentle scholar, you would kill me, would you? You would drink my blood? That is it, is it? And my daughter is your accomplice! Good God! am I in a den of thieves—in a brigand's cave? Ah, well, the Governor shall know all this morning, and his Highness, the Stadtholder, shall know all to-morrow. We know the law: 'Whoso shall rebel in prison.' Article 6. We will give you a second edition of the Buytenhof, Master Scholar, and a good one at that. Yes, indeed, you may gnaw your paws like a caged bear, and you, my beauty, devour your Cornelius with your eyes. I warn you, my lambs, that you shall no longer have the felicity of hatching plots together. Come, off with you, unnatural daughter. And as for you, Sir Scholar, be easy; we shall meet again."

Rosa, mad with terror and despair, threw a kiss to her friend; then struck, no doubt, by a sudden thought, she rushed to the staircase, saying:

"All is not yet lost; rely on me, my Cornelius."

Her father followed her, growling as he went.

As for the poor tulip-fancier, little by little he relaxed the grip of his convulsive fingers upon the bars; his head grew heavy, his eyes rolled, and he fell heavily upon the stone floor of his cell, muttering:

"Stolen; it has been stolen from me!"

Meanwhile, Boxtel had left the fortress by the door opened by Rosa herself, and, with the black tulip hidden under a large cloak, had thrown himself into a coach which awaited him at Gorcûm, and disappeared without, of course, one word of warning to his friend Gryphus of his sudden departure.

And now that we have seen him enter his coach, we will, if the reader so pleases, follow him to the end of his journey.

He proceeded slowly, for a black tulip could not travel post haste with impunity.

But Boxtel, fearing he might not arrive soon enough, had a box made at Delft, lined all round with fresh moss, in which he packed his tulip. The flower was so gently supported on every side, with an air space above, that the coach could go at full speed without any possible harm.

Next morning he arrived at Haarlem, fatigued but triumphant, repotted his tulip, in order to conceal any trace of his theft, broke the china pot and threw the fragments into a canal, wrote a letter to the President of the Horticultural Society, in which he announced that he had just arrived at Haarlem with a perfectly black tulip, and installed himself at a good inn with his flower intact.

And there he waited

CHAPTER XXV

PRESIDENT VAN SYSTEMS

ROSA, on leaving Cornelius, had determined on a course of action. This was to give him back the tulip stolen by Jacob or never to see him again, for she had seen the poor prisoner's despair, his twofold and incurable despair.

On the other hand, separation was inevitable, now that Gryphus had surprised the secret of their love and of their meetings.

It was the overthrow of all Cornelius van Baerle's ambitious hopes, hopes which he had nourished for seven long years.

Rosa was one of those women who are crushed by trifles, but who, strong in great trouble, find in misfortune itself energy wherewith to combat it, or resource to overcome it.

She returned home, threw one last look round her room, to make sure she had not been mistaken, and that the tulip was not in some corner where it might have escaped her notice. But she looked in vain, the tulip was still missing; the tulip was verily and indeed stolen.

Rosa made up a little packet of necessary clothing, took her three hundred guilders, which were her whole fortune, rummaged amongst her laces where the third bulb was hidden, concealed it jealously in her bosom, double-locked her door to postpone as long as possible the moment when her flight would be known, descended the stairs, left the prison by the door which had given

egress to Boxtel an hour earlier, and made her way to a livery-stable keeper to hire a coach.

The man had but one chaise, the very one which Boxtel had hired from him on the previous day and in which he was now journeying along the road to Delft. We say the road to Delft, because he was obliged to make an enormous *détour* to get from Loewestein to Haarlem ; as the crow flies it would have been only half the distance. But only birds can go across country in Holland, which is more cut up by rivers, streams, rivulets, canals and lakes than any other country in the world. Rosa, therefore, was obliged to take a horse, which was willingly entrusted to her ; the livery-stable keeper knowing her to be the daughter of the gaoler of the fortress.

She had hopes of overtaking her messenger, a good and honest lad whom she would take with her, and who would serve at once as her guide and protector.

And, in fact, she had not gone a league ere she saw him hastening along one of the side paths of a pretty road bordering the river.

Setting her horse at a canter, she soon overtook him.

The honest lad was ignorant of the importance of his message, but yet went as fast as though he had been aware of it. In less than an hour he had covered a league and a half.

Rosa took the now useless note from him and explained what she required of him. The boatman placed himself at her disposal and promised to go as fast as the horse, provided Rosa would allow him to rest his hand either on the horse's crupper or his withers and she gave him permission to do as he wished so long as he did not retard her own progress.

The travellers had been gone five hours and had made more than eight leagues before Gryphus suspected that the girl had left the fortress.

The gaoler, who was a thoroughly bad-hearted fellow was delighted at having struck such profound terror into his daughter's heart. But, whilst he congratulated

lated himself upon having so good a story to tell his companion Jacob, the latter was also on his way to Delft, though, thanks to his carriage, he was already four leagues ahead of Rosa and the boatman.

And whilst Gryphus imagined Rosa to be weeping or sulking in her room, she was every moment increasing the distance between them.

Thus, no one, except the prisoner, was where Gryphus believed him to be.

Since she had been looking after the tulip, Rosa had been so little with her father that it was not until dinner-time (that is to say, at midday) that Gryphus was made aware by his appetite that his daughter 'sulked too long.

He sent one of his turnkeys to fetch her ; then, when the latter came down to say he had sought her and called her in vain, he resolved to seek her and call her himself.

He commenced by going straight to her room ; but it was useless to knock, Rosa made no reply.

The locksmith of the fortress was sent for and opened the door, but Gryphus found Rosa no more than Rosa had found the tulip. At that moment she was entering Rotterdam. For which reason Gryphus had no more success in the kitchen than in her bedroom, nor in the garden than in the kitchen.

The gaoler's anger may be imagined when, having searched the neighbourhood he learned that his daughter had hired a horse and, like Bradamante or Clorinda, had set out in search of adventures, without saying where she was going. He rushed furiously up to Van Baerle, abused him, threatened him, threw his poor furniture about, and promised him the black hole, the deepest dungeon, starvation, and flogging.

Cornelius, without even listening to what his gaoler said, allowed himself to be ill-treated, abused and threatened, remaining the while, sad, immovable, crushed, insensible to every emotion, even to fear.

After seeking Rosa everywhere, Gryphus sought for

Jacob, and being no better able to find him than he had been to find his daughter, from that moment suspected him of having run away with her.

The girl, after a halt of two hours at Rotterdam, had set out once more upon her journey. That evening she slept at Delft, and arrived next day at Haarlem, four hours after Boxtel had arrived there.

First of all she asked to be conducted to the President of the Horticultural Society, Mynheer van Systems, and she found that worthy citizen in a situation which we cannot refrain from depicting without failing in our duties as painter and historian.

The President was drawing up a report to the Committee of the Society, upon large paper, in his very best handwriting.

Rosa caused herself to be announced simply as Rosa Gryphus ; but this name, however well it might sound, was unknown to the President, and she was refused admittance. It is difficult to force an entry in Holland, the country of dykes and locks.

Rosa was by no means abashed, for she had undertaken a mission, and had sworn to herself not to be cast down by rebuffs, brutality, or abuse.

"Tell the President," said she, "that I am come to speak to him about the black tulip."

These words, no less magical than the famous "Open Sesame" of the Arabian Nights, served her as a passport. Thanks to them she was able to reach President van Systems' bureau.

He was a spare little man, exactly representing the stem of a flower, his head forming the calyx, while two limply hanging arms seemed like the oblong leaves of the tulip, and a certain waddling gait which was habitual to him completed his resemblance to that flower when it sways in the breeze.

We have said that he was called Mynheer van Systems.

"They tell me, my girl," he cried, "that you have come on behalf of the black tulip."

To the President of the Horticultural Society, you

see, *Tulupa Nigra* was a power of the first rank, which, in its quality of queen of tulips, might well send ambassadors.

"Yes, Sir," replied Rosa; "at least, I am come to speak of it."

"It is well, I hope?" inquired Van Systems, with a smile of tender veneration.

"Alas, Sir, I cannot say," replied Rosa.

"What! Has any misfortune befallen it?"

"A grave one, Sir; not to it, but to me."

"How so?"

"It has been stolen from me."

"The black tulip has been stolen from you?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Do you know by whom?"

"Oh, I have my suspicions, but I dare not accuse any one as yet."

"But the matter could be easily verified."

"How is that?"

"If it has been stolen from you, the thief cannot be far off."

"Why should he not be far off?"

"Why, because I saw it only two hours since."

"You saw the black tulip?" cried Rosa, rushing towards Mynheer van Systems.

"As well as I see you."

"But where?"

"At your master's, of course."

"My master's?"

"Yes. Are you not in the service of Mynheer Isaac Boxtel?"

"I?"

"Yes, certainly, you."

"But for whom do you take me, Sir?"

"For whom do you take me yourself?"

"Sir, I take you, I trust, for what you are; that is to say, the Honourable Mynheer van Systems, Burgo-master of Haarlem, and President of the Horticultural Society."

"And you have just told me——?"

"I have just told you, Sir, that my tulip has been stolen."

"Your tulip, then, is Mynheer Boxtel's tulip. Well, my child, you explain yourself very badly; it is not from you, but from Mynheer Boxtel that the tulip has been stolen."

"I repeat, Sir, that I do not know who this Mynheer Boxtel is, and this is the first time that I have heard his name."

"You do not know who Mynheer Boxtel is, and yet you also had a black tulip?"

"But is there another?" asked Rosa, trembling.

"Yes; there is that of Mynheer Boxtel."

"What is it like?"

"Black, of course."

"Without blemish?"

"Without a single speck, without the least defect."

"And you have this tulip; it has been deposited here?"

"No; but it will be, for I must show it to the Committee before the prize can be awarded."

"Sir," cried Rosa, "this Isaac Boxtel, who calls himself the owner of the black tulip——"

"And is so, in fact."

"Sir, is he not a very thin man?"

"Yes."

"Bald-headed?"

"Yes."

"With a haggard look?"

"I believe so."

"Restless, crook-backed, and bow-legged?"

"In truth, you have drawn Mynheer Boxtel's portrait, feature for feature."

"Sir, is the tulip in a pot of blue china with a basket of yellow flowers depicted on three sides of the pot?"

"Oh, I cannot be sure of that; I looked at the man rather than the pot!"

"Sir, it is my tulip, the one which was stolen from

me ; Sir, it belongs to me, and I am come to claim it at your hands."

"Oh, indeed !" said Mynheer Van Systems, looking at Rosa. "What ! you are here to claim Mynheer Boxtel's tulip ? Zounds ! You are a bold baggage."

"Sir," said Rosa, somewhat disconcerted by this apostrophe, "I did not say I came to claim Mynheer Boxtel's tulip, but my own."

"Your own ?"

"Yes ; the one I planted and raised myself."

"Well, go and find Mynheer Boxtel at the White Swan Inn and settle matters with him ; as for me, as the case seems as difficult to judge as the one brought before King Solomon, and as I do not pretend to have his wisdom, I shall content myself with making my report, verifying the existence of the black tulip, and ordering the hundred thousand guilders to be paid to the grower. Good day to you, my child !"

"Oh, Sir ! Sir !" implored Rosa.

"Only, my child," continued Van Systems, "as you are both young and pretty, and not altogether abandoned yet to evil courses, do you take my advice. Be very careful, my girl ; we have magistrates and a bridewell at Haarlem ; and I tell you, we are extremely ticklish where the honour of our tulips is concerned. Go my child ; go. Mynheer Isaac Boxtel, the White Swan Inn."

And Mynheer van Systems, taking up his finest pen, returned to his interrupted report.

CHAPTER XXVII

A DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF HAARLEM

ROSA, desperate, almost mad with joy and fear, at the thought that the black tulip was found again, took her way to the White Swan Inn, still followed by her boatman, a stout lad from Friesland, capable of devouring ten Buxtels.

On the way the boatman had been made acquainted with the state of affairs and he was not afraid of a scuffle should one be inevitable; only in such case he had orders to look after the tulip.

But on arriving at the Groote Markt, Rosa stopped dead, struck by a sudden thought, like Homer's Minerva, who seized Achilles by the hair just as he was about to be carried away by anger.

"Good Heaven!" she muttered, "I made a great mistake, perchance I have ruined Cornelius, the tulip, and myself. I have given the alarm, I have raised suspicion. I am but a woman; these men may league themselves against me, and then I am lost. If I am lost, it matters not—but Cornelius and the tulip."

She reflected for a moment.

"If I go to this Boxel and I do not know him; if this Boxel is not Jacob; if he is another fancier who has also discovered the black tulip; or, indeed, if my tulip has been stolen by another than he whom I suspect, or has already passed into other hands; if I do not recognise the man, but only my tulip—how can I

prove the tulip is mine ? On the other hand, if I recognise in this Boxtel the false Jacob, who knows what will come of it ? While we are quarrelling with one another, the tulip will die ! Oh, Holy Virgin, inspire me ! My fate and the fate of the poor prisoner, who, it may be, is dying at this moment, are in the balance."

Her prayer ended, Rosa waited piously for the inspiration she asked of Heaven.

Meanwhile, a great noise became audible at the other side of the Groote Markt ; men running to and fro, doors opening and shutting ; Rosa alone was insensible to all this stir among the populace.

"We must return to the President," she murmured.

"Come along, then," said the boatman.

They turned into a narrow street which led them directly to the house of Mynheer van Systens, who, in his best handwriting and with his best pen, was still at work at his report.

Everywhere Rosa heard people talking about the black tulip and the prize of a hundred thousand guilders ; the news had spread like wildfire through the town already.

She had no little difficulty in again penetrating to Mynheer van Systens' office, who, however, was again affected as he had been at first, by the magic name of the black tulip.

But when he recognised Rosa, whom he had in his own mind put down as mad or even worse, he was seized with anger and tried to send her away.

But Rosa clasped her hands, and with that accent of honest truth which goes straight to the heart :

"Sir," said she, "for Heaven's sake do not repulse me, but listen to what I am going to say, and if you cannot do me justice, at least you will not have to reproach yourself one day before God for having connived at evil."

Mynheer van Systens stamped his foot with impatience ; it was the second time that Rosa had interrupted him in the midst of a composition which touched his

vanity as Burgomaster and President of the Horticultural Society.

"But my report," he cried, "my report on the black tulip."

"Sir," continued Rosa, with the firmness of innocence and truth, "Sir, if you do not listen to me, your report on the black tulip will be based on crime and falsehood. I implore, Sir, let this Mynheer Boxtel, whom I assert to be Mynheer Jacob, be brought here before you and me, and I swear to God that I will leave him in possession of his tulip if I do not recognise both the tulip and its possessor."

"Well, I declare, that's a pretty project," said Van Systems.

"What do you mean?"

"I ask you what is proved by it all, if you *do* recognise them?"

"But, after all," said Rosa, in despair, "you are an honest man, Sir, and surely you would not give the prize to a man for a work which he has not only not done, but which he has stolen."

Rosa's speech may have carried a certain conviction to Van Systems' heart, and he was about to answer the poor girl kindly, when a great noise was heard in the street, which seemed to be purely and simply an augmentation of the noise which Rosa had heard already, though without attaching much importance to it, in the Groote Markt, and which had not had the power of rousing her from her fervent prayer.

Clamorous shouts shook the building.

Mynheer van Systems listened a moment to the acclamations, which had not been even a noise to Rosa at first, and which were now only quite ordinary sounds.

"What is this?" cried the Burgomaster, "what is this? Can it be possible that I have heard aright?"

And he rushed to the ante-room, without giving another thought to Rosa, whom he left in his study.

Scarcely had he reached the ante-room when he uttered a loud cry at perceiving his staircase invaded as far

the hall. Accompanied, or rather followed, by the multitude, a young man, simply dressed in a violet velvet coat, embroidered with silver, was ascending the spotless white stone stairs with aristocratic deliberation.

Van Systens, making his way through the scared domestics, began to bow, almost to prostrate himself before the new-comer who was the cause of all this stir.

"Oh, my Lord!" he cried, "my Lord! Your Highness coming to see me! What an everlasting honour for my poor house!"

"Dear Mynheer van Systens," said William of Orange, with a serenity which with him took the place of a smile, "I am a true Dutchman; I love water, beer and flowers, sometimes even that cheese which the French appreciate so much; of all flowers I naturally prefer tulips. I heard at Leyden that the town of Haarlem possessed the black tulip, and after having assured myself that this was true, however incredible, I am come to ask for further news from the President of the Horticultural Society."

"Oh, my Lord! my Lord!" said the enraptured Van Systens, "what glory to the Society if its labours are pleasing to your Highness."

"You have the flower here?" said the Prince, who, doubtless, already regretted having spoken so much.

"Alas! no, my Lord, I have not got it here."

"Then where is it?"

"With its owner."

"Who is the owner?"

"An honest tulip-fancier from Dordrecht."

"From Dordrecht?"

"Yes."

"And his name?"

"Boxtel."

"Where does he lodge?"

"At the White Swan; I will send for him, and if, in the meanwhile, your Highness would do me the honour of entering my drawing-room, he will hasten—knowing that your Highness is here—to bring the tulip to you."

"Very well, send for him."

"Yes, your Highness, only——"

"Well?"

"Oh, nothing of any consequence, my Lord."

"Everything is of consequence in this world, Van Systems."

"Well, my Lord, a difficulty has arisen."

"What is it?"

"The tulip is claimed already by usurpers. It is true that it is worth a hundred thousand guilders."

"Really?"

"Yes, my Lord, by usurpers, by forgers."

"That is a crime, Mynheer van Systems."

"It is, your Highness."

"And have you any proof of the crime?"

"No, my Lord; the guilty woman——"

"The guilty woman, Sir?"

"I should say, the woman who claims the tulip, my Lord, is there, in a room close by."

"So! And what think you, Mynheer van Systems?"

"I think, my Lord, that the bait of the hundred thousand guilders may have tempted her."

"And she claims the tulip?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"And what proof has she to offer?"

"I was about to examine her when your Highness entered."

"Let us hear her, Mynheer van Systems; let us hear her. I am the first magistrate of the country, I will hear the case and administer justice."

"I have found my King Solomon," said Van Systems bowing and showing the Prince the way.

The latter was about to enter first, when he stopped suddenly.

"Go you in front," he said, "and address me as Mynheer."

Then they entered the study.

Rosa was still in the same place, leaning against the window and looking out into the garden.

"Ah, a Frieslander," said the Prince, as he caught sight of Rosa's gold brocade cap and red skirts.

She turned at the sound, but she hardly noticed the Prince, who sat down in the darkest corner of the room.

All her attention, as may be understood, was for that important personage called Van Systens, and not for the humble stranger who followed the master of the house, and who probably had no name at all.

The humble stranger took down a book from a shelf and signed to Van Systens to commence the examination.

Van Systens, again at the invitation of the young man in the violet coat, sat down in his turn and, delighted and proud at the importance thrust upon him, said :

"My child, you promise to speak the truth, and the whole truth, about this tulip ? "

"I do."

"Well, you may speak before this gentleman, he is one of the members of the Horticultural Society."

"Sir," said Rosa, "what can I tell you beyond what I have already said ? "

"Well, what then ? "

"Well, then I return to the request I have already made."

"What is that ? "

"Bring Mynheer Boxtel here with his tulip ; if I do not recognise it as mine, I will say so frankly ; but if I do recognise it, I will claim it, even if I have to go before his Highness, the Stadtholder, with my proofs in my hand."

"Then you have some proofs, my pretty child ? "

"God, who knows my right, will furnish them."

Van Systens exchanged a look with the Prince, who, after Rosa's first word, seemed to be trying to recall her, as if this were not the first time her sweet voice had struck his ears.

An Officer set out to fetch Boxtel.

Van Systens continued the examination. "And

upon what," said he, "do you base your assertions that you are the owner of the black tulip?"

"On a very simple fact, which is, that I planted and cultivated it in my own room."

"In your room? and where is your room?"

"At Loewestein."

"You come from Loewestein?"

"I am the daughter of the gaoler of the fortress there."

The Prince made a slight movement as though to say, "Ah, that is it; now I remember"; and, whilst still pretending to read, he watched Rosa still more closely than before.

"And you love flowers?" continued Van Systems.

"Yes, Sir."

"You are, no doubt, an experienced florist?"

Rosa hesitated for a moment, then, in a tone which came from the depths of her heart she said:

"Sirs, I speak to men of honour?"

There was so much truth in her voice that Van System and the Prince both nodded their heads affirmatively at the same moment.

"Well, then, no; it is not I who am a clever florist, no, I am only a poor daughter of the people, a poor peasant girl from Friesland, who did not even know how to read and write three months ago. No, the black tulip was not discovered by me."

"By whom, then, was it discovered?"

"By a poor prisoner of Loewestein."

"By a prisoner of Loewestein?" said the Prince.

At the sound of his voice Rosa trembled.

"By a prisoner of State?" continued the Prince.

"For at Loewestein there are only State prisoners" and he returned to his reading, or at least pretended to.

"Yes," murmured the trembling Rosa, "yes, by State prisoner."

Van Systems turned pale, on hearing such an avowal made before such a witness.

"Go on," said William, coldly, to the President of the Horticultural Society.

"Oh, Sir," said Rosa, addressing herself to him whom she took to be her true judge, "I am going to incriminate myself very deeply."

"As a matter of fact," said Van Systens, "the State prisoners should be kept in close confinement at Loewenstein."

"Alas! Sir."

"And according to yourself, you would seem to have taken advantage of your position as the gaoler's daughter, and have communicated with the prisoner in order to cultivate flowers?"

"Yes, Sir," murmured Rosa, desperately; "yes, I must acknowledge it, I saw him every day."

"Unhappy woman!" cried Mynheer van Systens.

The Prince raised his head and observed Rosa's terror and the President's pallor.

"That," said he, in his clear and firmly accentuated voice, "that does not concern the members of the Horticultural Society; they have to judge the black tulip and take no cognisance of political misdemeanours. Continue, my girl, continue."

Van Systens, by an eloquent look, thanked the new member of the Horticultural Society in the name of the tulips.

Rosa, reassured by the encouragement given her by the stranger, related all that had passed during the last three months—all that she had done, all that she had suffered. She spoke of Gryphus's cruelties, of the destruction of the first bulb; of the prisoner's sorrow; of the precautions taken to ensure the safety of the second bulb; of the prisoner's patience; of his agony during their separation; how he had wished to die of hunger, because he had no news of his tulip; of the joy he had experienced at their re-union; finally, of the despair of both when they saw that the flower which had just bloomed had been stolen an hour after it opened.

All this was said with an accent of truth, which left the Prince unmoved, at least in appearance, but which did not fail to have its effect upon Mynheer van Systens.

"But," said the Prince, "you have not known the prisoner for long?"

Rosa stared at the stranger, who drew back into the shadow, as though he would avoid her look.

"Why, Sir?" she asked.

"Because the gaoler, Gryphus, and his daughter, have only been four months at Loewestein."

"That is true, Sir."

"And unless you solicited the transfer of your father to follow some prisoner, who has been brought from The Hague to Loewestein——"

"Sir!" said Rosa, blushing.

"Finish," said William.

"I confess, I knew the prisoner at The Hague."

"Lucky prisoner!" said William, with a smile.

At that moment the Officer, who had been sent for Boxtel, returned and announced to the Prince that the man he had been to fetch was following him with the tulip.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE THIRD BULB

THE announcement of Boxtel's return was hardly made before he entered Mynheer van Systens' withdrawing-room in person, followed by two men, carrying their precious burden in a box, which they deposited on the table.

The Prince, on being informed, left the study, went into the drawing-room, admired the flowers, and, returning, silently resumed his place in the dark corner in which he had himself placed a chair.

Rosa, pale, trembling and terrified, waited to be invited, in her turn, to come forward and inspect the flower.

She heard Boxtel's voice. "It is he," she cried.

The Prince signed to her to go and look through the half-opened door of the withdrawing-room.

"It is my tulip!" cried Rosa; "I recognise it. Oh, poor Cornelius!" and she burst into tears.

The Prince rose and went to the door, where he stood for a moment in the full light.

Rosa's eyes rested upon him, and she was more than ever certain that it was not the first time she had seen the stranger.

"Mynheer Boxtel," said the Prince, "come here."

Boxtel hastened forward, and found himself face to face with William of Orange.

"His Highness!" he cried, stepping back.

"His Highness!" repeated Rosa, stupefied.

At this exclamation on his left, Boxtel turned and

saw Rosa. At sight of her his whole frame shook, as if from a galvanic shock.

"Ah!" muttered the Prince, speaking to himself, "he is disconcerted."

But Boxtel had regained his composure by a powerful effort.

"Mynheer Boxtel," said William, "it appears that you have discovered the secret of the black tulip."

"Yes, my Lord," replied Boxtel, in a somewhat troubled voice.

It is true that this agitation might have been caused by the tulip-grower's emotion on recognising William.

"But," continued the Prince, "here is a girl who pretends to have discovered it also."

Boxtel smiled disdainfully, shrugging his shoulders.

William followed all his movements with singular curiosity and interest.

"Then you do not know this girl?" said the Prince.

"No, my Lord."

"And you, child; do you know Mynheer Boxtel?"

"No; I do not know Mynheer Boxtel, but I know Mynheer Jacob."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that at Loewestein, this man who now calls himself Isaac Boxtel, went by the name of Mynheer Jacob."

"What do you say to that, Mynheer Boxtel?"

"I say that the girl lies, my Lord."

"You deny ever having been at Loewestein!"

Boxtel hesitated; the Prince's fixed and searching scrutiny kept him from lying.

"I do not deny ever having been at Loewestein, my Lord, but I deny having stolen the tulip."

"You stole it from me, and from my room!" cried Rosa, indignantly.

"I deny it."

"Listen to me. Do you deny having followed me into the garden, on the day when I was preparing the border where I was going to plant it? Do you deny

having followed me into the garden the day when I pretended to plant it? Do you deny having rushed, that evening after I had left, to the spot where you had hoped to find the bulb? Do you deny having dug in the soil with your hands? but in vain, thank God! for it was only a trick to find out your intentions. Tell me, do you deny all this?"

Boxtel did not attempt to reply to these different questions, but, ignoring her attack, turned towards the Prince.

"I have cultivated tulips for twenty years at Dordrecht, my Lord," said he. "I have even acquired a certain reputation in this art, one of my hybrids bearing an honoured name in the catalogue. I have dedicated it to the King of Portugal. Now this is the truth: this girl knows that I have discovered the black tulip, and in collusion with a lover of hers in the fortress of Loewenstein she has endeavoured to ruin me by appropriating the prize of one hundred thousand guilders, which I trust by your Highness's justice I shall gain."

"Oh," cried Rosa, overcome with anger.

"Silence," said the Prince. Then turning towards Boxtel. "And who is this prisoner," said he, "whom you declare to be the girl's lover?"

Rosa nearly fainted, for Cornelius had been designated by the Prince as a dangerous prisoner.

Nothing could have pleased Boxtel more than this question.

"Who is this prisoner?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"This prisoner, my Lord, is a man whose name alone will prove to your Highness how much faith can be placed in his probity. This prisoner is a State criminal, at one time condemned to death."

"And what is his name?"

Rosa buried her head in both hands with a movement of despair.

"He is called Cornelius van Baerle," said Boxtel, "and is the godson of that scoundrel, Cornelius de Witt."

The Prince trembled. His calm eye flashed fire, then a deadly pallor overspread his impassive countenance.

He went up to Rosa, and signed to her to remove her hands from her face.

Rosa obeyed, as if in a magnetic trance, and without her eyes seeing him.

"Then it was in order to follow this man that you came to Leyden and asked me to transfer your father?"

Rosa bowed her head, and sank to the floor quite crushed, murmuring:

"Yes, my Lord."

"Continue," said the Prince to Boxtel.

"I have nothing more to say," continued the latter, "Your Highness knows all. However, there is something that I did not wish to say, in order that this girl might not have to blush for her ingratitude. I went to Loewestein because my business took me there. There I made the acquaintance of old Gryphus, and fell in love with his daughter. I proposed to her, and as I was not rich, I very imprudently confided to her my hope of winning this hundred thousand guilders; and in order to justify this hope, I showed her the black tulip. Then, as her lover at Dordrecht, in order to conceal the plots he was hatching, had pretended to cultivate tulips, together they plotted my ruin. On the eve of the opening of the flower, the tulip was carried away from my house by this girl into her own bedchamber, from whence I had the good fortune to recover it at the very instant the bold baggage was sending off a messenger to announce to the members of the Horticultural Society that she had just found the black tulip. But she did not stop there. No doubt during the few hours that she had kept it in her room, she must have shown it to several people whom she will call as witnesses. But happily, my Lord, you have been warned against this impostor and her witnesses."

"Oh, my God, my God, what infamy!" Rosa sobbed out, throwing herself at the feet of the Stadtholder,

who, although believing her guilty, had compassion on her terrible anguish.

"You have done very wrong, child," said he, "and your lover will be punished for having advised you thus. For you are so young, and look so honest, that I would wish to believe the evil came from him, and not from you."

"Sir! Sir!" cried Rosa, "Cornelius is not guilty."

William started. "Not guilty of having advised you. That is what you would say, is it not?"

"I mean to say, my Lord, that Cornelius is no more guilty of the second crime than he is of the first imputed to him."

"Of the first? and do you know what that crime was? Do you know what he has been accused and convicted of? Of having, as an accomplice of Cornelius de Witt, hidden the correspondence of the Grand Pensionary and the Marquis de Louvois."

"Well, my Lord, he was ignorant of this correspondence having been lodged with him—entirely ignorant. Oh, my Lord, he told me so. Is it possible that this heart of gold should have had a secret that was kept from me? No, no, my Lord, I repeat it; even should I incur your displeasure, Cornelius is no more guilty of the first crime than he is of the second, and of the second than the first. Oh, if you only knew my Cornelius, my Lord."

"A De Witt!" cried Boxel. "Ah, his Highness knows him only too well, since he has granted him his life once."

"Silence," said the Prince. "All these State affairs, as I have already said, have nothing at all to do with the Horticultural Society at Haarlem." Then knitting his brow: "As to the tulip, Mynheer Boxel, rest assured," he added, "justice shall be done."

Boxel bowed, his heart full of joy, and received the congratulations of the President.

"As for you, child," continued William of Orange, "you have essayed to commit a crime. I shall not

punish you, but the true culprit shall pay for both. A man of his name can conspire, even betray, but he must not steal."

"Steal!" cried Rosa, "steal! he, Cornelius! Oh, my Lord, take care. He would die if he heard your words; your words would kill him more certainly than the axe of the executioner on the Buytenhof. If there has been a theft, my Lord, I swear it—it is this man who has committed it."

"Prove it," said Boxtel, coldly.

"Yes, yes, I will. With God's help I will prove it," said the Frieslander, emphatically.

Then turning to Boxtel: "The tulip is yours?"

"Yes."

"How many seedling bulbs had it?"

Boxtel hesitated for a moment, but he understood that the girl would not have asked the question if the two bulbs of whose existence he was aware had been the only ones.

"Three," said he.

"What has become of these bulbs?" asked Rosa.

"What has become of them? One failed, the other produced the black tulip——"

"And the third?"

"The third?"

"The third; where is it?"

"The third is at home," said Boxtel, somewhat discomposed.

"At home; where is that? At Loewestein, or at Dordrecht?"

"At Dordrecht," said Boxtel.

"You lie!" cried Rosa. "My Lord," added she, turning towards the Prince, "I am going to tell you the true history of these three bulbs. The first was crushed by my father in the prisoner's room, and this man knows it, for he hoped to seize it, and when he saw his hope dispelled, he got nearly beside himself with rage at my father, who had robbed him of it. The second, cared for by myself, produced the black tulip, and the

third, the last"—and she drew it from her bosom—the last—the third is here in the same paper in which it was wrapped with the other two, when at the moment of mounting the scaffold, Cornelius van Baerle gave me all three. Take it, my Lord, take it."

And Rosa, unwrapping the bulb from the paper which had covered it, offered it to the Prince, who took it from her hands, and examined it.

"But, my Lord, she may have stolen it, as she did my tulip," stammered Boxel, frightened at the attention with which the Prince examined the bulb, and above all at the way in which Rosa was reading some lines traced on the paper, which had remained in her hands.

Suddenly the girl's eyes sparkled, she re-read the mysterious paper almost breathlessly, and uttered a cry as she gave the paper to the Prince.

"Oh, my Lord, read it!" said she; "in Heaven's name, read it!"

William handed the third bulb to the President, took the paper, and read it.

Scarcely had William glanced at the leaf than he staggered, his hand trembled as if it would drop the paper, his eyes assumed a startled expression of sadness and pity.

This leaflet which Rosa had just given him was the leaf of a Bible that Cornelius de Witt had sent to Dordrecht, by Craeke, his brother John's messenger, to beg Cornelius to burn the correspondence of the Grand Pensionary with Louvois.

This prayer, as may be remembered, was couched in the following terms:

"DEAR GODSON,—

"Burn the packet I gave into your care—burn it without looking at it, without even opening it; so that you yourself may not know its contents. Such secrets as it contains bring death to those entrusted with them.

Burn it, and you will have saved both John and Cornelius.

“Farewell, from your loving

“CORNELIUS DE WITT.”

This leaflet was at once the proof of Van Baerle's innocence and his title of ownership to the tulip-bulb.

Rosa and the Stadtholder gave each other a look.

Rosa's said, “You see now.”

The Stadtholder's signified, “Silence and patience.”

The Prince wiped his brow. He slowly folded the paper, while his thoughts plunged into that bottomless pit which is called repentance and shame of the past.

Soon, however, raising his head with an effort, he said :

“Go, Mynheer Boxtel. I promise you justice shall be done.” Then to the President, “You, my dear Mynheer van Systens, keep the maiden and the tulip here. Farewell.”

Every one bowed, and the Prince went out, bending beneath the weight of the popular acclamations.

Boxtel returned to the White Swan profoundly puzzled. The paper William had received from Rosa's hands, and which he had read, folded, and put so carefully in his pocket, made him uneasy.

Rosa approached the tulip, kissing its leaves reverently and confided her whole self to God, murmuring :

“My God, canst Thou then have known all along for what good purpose my Cornelius taught me to read ?

Yes, God knew it, since it is He who punishes and who rewards men according to their deserts.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SONG OF THE FLOWERS

WHILE the events which we have just related were taking place, the unfortunate Van Baerle, forgotten in his cell in the fortress of Loewestein, suffered from Gryphus all that a prisoner can suffer when his gaoler has made up his mind to play the part of tormentor.

Receiving no news of Rosa or of Jacob, Gryphus persuaded himself that all that had happened to him had been the work of the devil, and that Doctor Cornelius van Baerle was the devil's emissary on earth.

Thus it happened that one fine morning, the third after the disappearance of Jacob and Rosa, he went up to Cornelius's room more furious than ever.

The latter, with his elbows leaning on the window-sill, his head resting on his hands, and his eyes wandering over the misty horizon, where the windmills of Dordrecht were turning their sails, was breathing in the fresh air in order to keep back his tears, and maintain his philosophy.

The pigeons were still there, but hope was not ; the future was a blank.

Alas ! Rosa, being watched, could no longer come. If only she could write ; but, even if she could, would she be able to get her letters to him ?

No ; during the last two days he had seen too much anger and malignity in old Gryphus's eyes to expect that his vigilance would relax for one moment, and besides exclusion and separation, had she not perhaps torture

to endure as well ? Would this brute, this bully, this drunkard, not avenge himself in the manner of father in the Greek drama ? and when the gin mounted to his head, would it not give to his arm, which had been only too well set by Cornelius, a greater strength ?

The idea that Rosa was, perhaps, being ill-treated nearly drove Cornelius mad.

He felt his uselessness, his powerlessness, the futility of his efforts. He questioned the justice of God in sending so much evil to two innocent creatures, and at these moments he certainly doubted it. Unhappiness and scepticism are twin brothers.

Van Baerle had, indeed, formed the project of writing to Rosa. But where *was* Rosa ?

He had also thought of writing to The Hague to beforehand with Gryphus, who would no doubt try to bring down fresh storms about his head.

But how could he write ? Gryphus had taken away his pencils and paper. And besides, even if he had either the one or the other, Gryphus certainly would not deliver his letter.

Then Cornelius went over and over again in his mind all the poor stratagems employed by prisoners.

He had even considered the idea of escape, a thing which he had never so much as thought of, while he could see Rosa each day. But the more he thought of it, the more impossible did it seem.

His was one of those choice spirits which have a horror of things common, and which often lose the good opportunities of life by failing to take the vulgar way, the great road of the commonplace which leads to all things.

"How would it be possible for me to escape from Loewestein, as Mynheer Grotius once did ? Has not every issue been doubly guarded since his escape ? Are not the windows well barred ? Are not the doors doubled or tripled ? Are not the guards ten times more vigilant ?

"Then, besides the barred windows, the double doors, the more than ever vigilant guards, have I not an alwa

watchful argus in Gryphus ? an argus so much the more dangerous, on account of the hatred in his eyes ?

“And, anyhow, is not Rosa’s absence a paralysing circumstance ? If I employed ten years of my life in making a file to cut through my bars, or plaiting ropes to descend from the window, or gluing wings to my shoulders to enable me to fly like Dædalus. . . . But bad luck pursues me. The file would get blunted, the cord would break, my wings would melt in the sun. I should only kill myself to no purpose ; they would pick me up broken-legged, broken-armed, broken-backed. Then they would clap me in the Museum at The Hague between the blood-stained tunic of William the Silent and the Mermaid found at Stavesen, and my enterprise would have had no result but to procure me the signal honour of becoming one of the standing curiosities of Holland !

“But no, this will be better ; one fine day Gryphus will do me some hurt. I lose patience now that I have lost the joy of Rosa’s society, and, above all, since I have lost my tulip. There is no doubt that some day or other Gryphus will attack me on a point which touches my vanity, my love, or my personal security. Since my captivity, I feel within me a strange, stubborn, and indomitable strength ; I have a longing for strife, an appetite for battle, an incomprehensible thirst for blows ; I will fall on the old villain and strangle him.”

With his last words Cornelius stopped a moment with compressed lips, clenched teeth and fixed gaze. Quickly he turned over in his mind a thought which made him smile.

“And then,” he continued, “Gryphus once strangled, why not take the keys from him ? Why not walk down the stairs as if I had committed a most virtuous action ? Why not go and look for Rosa in her room ? why not explain the facts to her, and leap with her from her window into the Waal ?

“I can certainly swim well enough for two.

“But then, my God, Gryphus is Rosa’s father ; she

could never care for me—whatever affection she might otherwise bear me—if I had strangled her father, brutal and cruel as he is. Then a discussion would be necessary, an explanation during which some under-chief or turnkey would arrive, who had found Gryphus dying or quite strangled, and, who would put his hand on my shoulder.

“Then I should see the Buytenhof once more, and the glitter of that ugly sword, which this time would not pause in its stroke, but would surely make acquaintance with my neck. No, Cornelius, my friend, that is a plan will never do!

“But, then, what is to be done; and how am I to find Rosa?”

Such were Cornelius's reflections three days after the sad separation between Rosa and her father, just at the time when we introduced the reader to Cornelius, leaning on the window-sill.

It was at this moment Gryphus entered.

He held an enormous club in his hand, his eyes glittered with evil thoughts, a wicked smile played on his lips, spite shook his body, and his whole look and appearance betokened malicious intentions.

Cornelius, distracted as we have just seen by the necessity for patience, heard him enter, guessed it was he, but did not even turn round.

He knew that this time Rosa would not come with him.

Nothing is more disagreeable to angry people than the indifference of those on whom their anger is to be vented.

Expenses having been incurred, one does not wish to lose them. Passion being roused, the blood boiling, we feel it is hardly worth the trouble taken, if we do not get the satisfaction of a little excitement.

Every honest scamp who has roused his evil genius desires at least to wound some one.

Gryphus, therefore, seeing that Cornelius did not move, sought to attract his attention by a loud “Ahem Ahem!”

Cornelius only hummed over to himself the Song of Flowers—a plaintive but charming ditty :

“ Daughters of hidden fire are we,
Fire that lurks in the womb of earth ;
Daughters of dawn and of dew are we ;
Daughters of air,
And daughters of earth,
But daughters of heaven above all three.”

The song—the placid melancholy of which was further lanced by its soft, sweet melody—exasperated Gryphus to the last degree.

He struck the flags with his stick, crying :

“ How now, master minstrel, don’t you hear me ? ”
Cornelius turned quietly round, and wished his gaoler good morning. Then he went on with his song :

“ Men love us only to maim and kill ;
We cling to earth by a single stay,
A single thread, our root and life,
But to heaven we lift our heads away.”

“ You accursed wizard, you, I believe you are making mock of me,” shouted Gryphus.

But Cornelius only went on singing :

“ For heaven, high heaven’s our native land ;
Thence comes our soul,
And thither returns,
For a flower’s soul is its perfume bland.”

Gryphus approached his prisoner. “ Don’t you see we have taken good means to bring you to reason, and we expect you to confess your crimes ? ”

“ What ? are you gone suddenly mad, good Master Gryphus ? ” Cornelius asked, turning to look at him. And, in so doing, he noticed the altered countenance, the burning eyes, and foaming mouth of the old gaoler. “ Deuce take him,” said Cornelius, “ he’s worse than I ; he’s raving.”

Gryphus brandished his cudgel above his head ; but Baerle only crossed his arms, saying :

“ So, Master Gryphus, so you would threaten me with violence, would you ? ”

"Yes, that I would," cried the gaoler.

"And why?"

"First of all, see what I hold in my hand."

"I believe it is a stick," said Cornelius, calmly, "a big stick too; but I do not suppose that you would threaten me with that?"

"Ah! you do not suppose so! And why?"

"Because any gaoler who strikes a prisoner lays himself open to two punishments; for the first, see Article IX. of the Rules and Regulations of Loewestein. 'Any gaoler, inspector, or turnkey who raises his hand on a State prisoner will be summarily dismissed.'"

"His hand," said Gryphus, mad with rage; "but a stick—that is different, the Rules say nothing about a stick!"

"The second," continued Cornelius, "which is not inscribed in the Rules, but is to be found in the Gospel, the second is this: 'Whoso smiteth with the sword shall perish by the sword.' Whoso strikes with a stick shall be beaten by the stick."

Gryphus, more and more exasperated by the calm, sententious tones of Cornelius, brandished his cudgel; but as he raised it, Cornelius rushed towards him, snatched it out of his hands, and put it under his own arm.

Gryphus yelled with rage.

"There, there, my good man," said Cornelius, "do not draw attention to yourself, and so be obliged to give up your place."

"Ah! you wizard, you; I will make it hot for you some other way," growled Gryphus.

"It is all very well to talk."

"You see my hand is empty?"

"Yes, I see it, and I am glad to see it."

"You know it is not usually so when I come upstairs in the morning."

"Very true; you usually bring me the worst soup or the most miserable rations imaginable. But it is no punishment for me; I only eat bread, and the worst

the bread is to your taste, Gryphus, the better it is to mine."

"The better it is to yours."

"Yes."

"How so?"

"Oh, that is very simple."

"Tell me, then."

"Willingly. I know that in giving me bad bread, you think you make me suffer."

"Well, I certainly don't give it you to please you, you thief!"

"Ah, well, I who am a sorcerer, as you know, change your bad bread into excellent bread, which pleases me better than cakes, and then I have a double pleasure; first of all, eating what is to my taste, and then in making you extremely angry."

Gryphus growled with rage. "Ah! you confess, then, that you are a sorcerer," said he.

"Well, if I am, I do not tell the whole world, because it might bring me to the stake like Gaudfredy or Urbain Grandier; but as we are alone, I do not mind owning it."

"Good, good, very good," replied Gryphus; "but if a sorcerer can turn black bread into white, will he not die of hunger if he has no bread at all?"

"Humph!" said Cornelius.

"Then I shall not bring you any more bread at all, and we will see what happens at the end of the week."

Cornelius turned pale.

"And," continued Gryphus, "we will begin from to-day. Since you are such a good sorcerer, you can change the furniture of your room into bread; as to me, I shall gain the eighteen sous a day that has been given to me to feed you on."

"But this is murder," cried Cornelius, carried away by the first emotion of quite comprehensible terror, conveyed by the thought of so horrible a death.

"Good," continued Gryphus, mocking him, "good, since you are a sorcerer, you will live upon nothing."

Cornelius regained his smiling look, and shrugging his shoulders :

“ But have you not seen how I brought the pigeons of Dordrecht here ? ”

“ Well ? ” said Gryphus.

“ Well, roast pigeon is a good dish, and I do not think a man who can get a pigeon every day would die of hunger.”

“ And how about a fire ? ”

“ A fire ! But you know I am in league with the devil, and do you suppose he will let me want for fire, when it is his natural element ? ”

“ No man, however strong, could eat a pigeon every day. Bets have been made about it, and those who made them have always lost.”

“ But,” said Cornelius, “ when I am tired of pigeons, I could make the fish in the Waal and the Meuse come up to me.”

Gryphus stared in bewilderment.

“ I am fond of fish,” continued Cornelius, “ and you never give it me. Well, I shall take advantage of your desire to starve me to death to regale myself with fish.”

Gryphus nearly swooned with rage and fear, but thought better of it.

“ Well, then,” he said, putting his hand in his pocket, since you will drive me to it ”—and, drawing out a knife, he opened it.

“ Halloa, a knife ! ” said Cornelius, putting himself on the defensive.

CHAPTER XXIX

VAN BAERLE, BEFORE LEAVING LOEWESTEIN SETTLES UP ACCOUNTS WITH GRYPHUS.

THEY stood thus for an instant, Gryphus on the offensive, Van Baerle on the defensive.

Then, as the situation might be indefinitely prolonged, Cornelius, seeking to know the cause of this recrudescence of anger on the part of his antagonist, asked :

“ Well, what do you want now ? ”

“ I will tell you what I want,” replied Gryphus. “ I want you to give me back my daughter Rosa.”

“ Your daughter ! ” cried Cornelius.

“ Yes, Rosa ! Rosa, whom you have robbed me of by your black arts. Come, will you tell me where she is ? ”

And his attitude became more and more threatening.

“ Is Rosa not at Loewestein ? ” cried Cornelius.

“ You know very well she is not. Once more, will you give her back to me ? ”

“ That is all very well,” said Cornelius ; “ you are laying a trap for me.”

“ For the last time, will you tell me where my daughter is ? ”

“ Guess, rogue, guess, if you really don't know.”

“ Wait a bit, wait a bit,” growled Gryphus, white with rage, and his lips quivering as madness seized his brain. “ Ah ! you will not answer ? Very well, then, I will soon open your mouth.” He took a

step towards Cornelius and showing him the weapon shining in his hand, cried, "Do you see this knife? Well, I have killed more than fifty black cocks with it, and I am going to kill their master the devil, as I have killed them."

"You scoundrel," said Cornelius. "Do you really mean to murder me?"

"I will cut your heart open to find the spot where you have hidden my daughter."

As he spoke these words with the delirium of fever, Gryphus threw himself upon Cornelius, who had barely time to dart behind the table to avoid the first blow.

Gryphus brandished his big knife, uttering horrid threats.

Cornelius saw that if he were beyond the reach of Gryphus's arm, he was not beyond the reach of the weapon, which, if flung at him, might bury itself in his heart; therefore he lost no time, and with the stick he had so carefully preserved, he dealt a vigorous blow upon the fist that held the knife.

The knife fell to the ground, and Cornelius put his foot upon it.

Then, as Gryphus appeared bent on engaging in a struggle which, from the pain in his wrist and the shame of having been twice disarmed, would have been desperate, Cornelius took a decisive step, and beat his gaoler unmercifully with perfectly heroic *sang froid*, carefully choosing the spot on which each blow of the terrible cudgel should fall.

Gryphus soon began to yell for mercy.

But, before doing so, he had shouted loudly, and his shouts had been heard and had roused all the prison functionaries. Two turnkeys, an inspector, and four guards appeared suddenly on the scene, and surprised Cornelius still wielding the stick, with the knife under his foot.

At sight of all these witnesses of the assault he had just committed, and to whom the extenuating circumstances, as we call them nowadays, were unknown, Cornelius

felt he was utterly lost. And, indeed, appearances were very much against him.

In a moment he was disarmed, and Gryphus, surrounded, raised, supported and bellowing with rage, could count the weals which began to rise upon his shoulders and spine like the hillocks dotted over a mountain ridge.

A report was drawn up forthwith of the violent assault made upon his gaoler by the prisoner, and a report prompted by Gryphus could not be accused of being half-hearted. It spoke of nothing less than a deliberate attempt to assassinate his gaoler—an attempt long prepared and obviously premeditated, combined with open mutiny.

Whilst the charge against Cornelius was being drawn up, the depositions made by Gryphus having rendered his presence no longer necessary, the two turnkeys had carried him down bruised and groaning to his lodge.

During this time, the guards, who had seized Cornelius, were engaged in charitably informing him of the usage and customs of Loewestein, which, however, he knew as well as they did, the regulations having been read to him at the time he entered the prison, and certain articles in them having remained stamped upon his memory.

Among other things they related to him how the rule had been applied in the case of a prisoner named Matthias who, in 1668, that is to say five years before, had committed an act of mutiny much less violent than that just committed by Cornelius.

He had found his soup too hot, and had thrown it at the chief warder's head, who, in consequence of this ablution, had suffered from the little inconvenience that on drying his face, a portion of the skin had come off on the towel.

Matthias, within twelve hours, had been taken from his room, conducted to the gaoler's lodge, where he had been inscribed as leaving Loewestein, from thence he was taken to the Esplanade, where the view is very fine,

and embraces eleven leagues of country. There his hands were fettered, and his eyes bandaged, and prayers were said.

Then they invited him to kneel, and the guards of Loewestein, to the number of twelve, on a sign from their sergeant, had very neatly lodged each of them a musket ball in his body. Whereupon Matthias had died incontinently.

Cornelius listened with the greatest attention to this unpleasant tale. Then he said :

"Within twelve hours, did you say ? "

"Yes, the twelfth hour had barely struck, as well as I remember," said the narrator.

"Thank you," said Cornelius.

The guard's face still wore the evil smile with which he had punctuated his story, when a heavy step resounded on the stairs, and spurs clanked on the well-worn flags.

The guards moved aside to make way for an Officer, who entered Cornelius's room at the moment when the scrivener of Loewestein was still busy drawing up his report.

"Is this Number 11 ? " he asked.

"Yes, Sir," answered a non-commissioned Officer.

"Then this is the room of the prisoner Cornelius van Baerle ? "

"It is, Sir."

"Where is the prisoner ? "

"I am here, Sir," replied Cornelius, turning rather pale in spite of all his courage.

"You are Mynheer Cornelius van Baerle ? " he asked, addressing the prisoner himself this time.

"Yes, Sir."

"Then follow me."

"Oh," thought Cornelius, whose heart sank, oppressed by the first anguish of death, "how quickly events move at Loewestein, and the rascal spoke to me of twelve hours ! "

"Ah ! what did I tell you ? " said the story-telling guard in the prisoner's ear.

"A lie."

"How so?"

"You promised me twelve hours."

"Ah, yes. But they have sent one of his Highness's aides-de-camp for you, and actually one of his most intimate friends, Mynheer van Deken. Zounds! they did not do poor Matthias such an honour."

"Come, come," said Cornelius, drawing a long breath. "Come, let us show these gentlemen that a citizen, godson of Cornelius de Witt, can hold as many musket balls as a Matthias, without making wry faces."

And he walked proudly past the clerk who, interrupted in his duties, ventured to say to the officer:

"But, Captain van Deken, my report is not yet concluded."

"It is not worth while finishing it," replied the Officer.

"Good," returned the scrivener, philosophically putting away his papers and pen in a worn and dirty pocket-book.

"It was written," thought poor Cornelius, "that I should not give my name in this world to a child, a flower, or a book the three necessities which God imposes more or less, I am told, upon every man to whom He grants on earth a soul, and the usufruct of a body."

And he followed the Officer with a resolute heart and a high head.

Cornelius counted the steps which led to the Esplanade, regretting that he had not asked the guard how many there were—a fact which the man in his officious complacency would not have failed to tell him.

What the poor prisoner dreaded most in this journey, which he looked upon as inevitably leading to the end of the great journey of life, was to see Gryphus and not to see Rosa. What delight would shine upon the father's face! What grief upon the daughter's!

How Gryphus would delight in this execution, the ferocious vengeance on an eminently just act, which Cornelius had had the conscience to accomplish as a duty!

But Rosa, poor girl, if she did not see him, if he were to die without having given her the last kiss, or at least the last good-bye!

If he must die, too, without any news of the great black tulip, and wake again on high, without knowing where to turn his eyes to find it!

Indeed, to save himself from tears, the poor tulip-fancier had need of even more of the *aes triplex* about his heart than Horace attributes to the navigator who first visited the cruel Acroceraunian rocks.

Cornelius looked in vain to the right and to the left, but he arrived at the Esplanade without having perceived either Rosa or Gryphus.

It was almost a consolation.

Arrived at the Esplanade, Cornelius looked bravely at the guards who were to be his executioners, and saw about a dozen soldiers assembled there chatting together. But they were standing about, and talking, with no muskets, and not drawn up in line. Cornelius thought their conduct unworthy of the gravity which usually presides over such events.

Suddenly Gryphus, hobbling, and leaning upon a crutch, appeared at the door of his lodge, with all the fires of his hatred gleaming from his old cat-like grey eyes. He proceeded to pour out upon Cornelius such a torrent of abominable imprecations that the latter appealed to the Officer.

"Sir," said he, "I do not think it is quite seemly that I should be allowed to be thus insulted by that man, and above all at such a moment."

"But," laughed the Officer, "it is very natural that the good man should wish you ill, for it appears that you gave him a sound thrashing."

"But, Sir, it was only in self-defence."

"Bah!" said the Captain, shrugging his shoulders philosophically. "Bah! let him talk. What can it matter to you now?"

A cold sweat broke out upon Cornelius's forehead at this reply, which he regarded as brutal irony, especially

on the part of an Officer who was, he was told, attached to the Prince's person.

The unhappy man realised that he had no more resources, no friends, and resigned himself to his fate.

"So be it," he murmured, bowing his head; "they have treated many other martyrs like Christ, and however innocent I am, I cannot compare myself to Him. Christ suffered Himself to be beaten by His gaoler, and did not beat him in return." Then, turning towards the Officer, who appeared to be complacently waiting until he should have finished his reflections, "Come, Sir," he asked, "where am I to go?"

The Officer pointed to a coach drawn by four horses, which recalled vividly to his mind the coach which, under similar circumstances, had before attracted his attention at the Buytenhof.

"Get in," said he.

"Ah," muttered Cornelius, "it appears that they are not going to give me the honours of the Esplanade."

He spoke the words loud enough for the story-teller—who seemed to be attached to his person—to hear.

He doubtless thought it was his duty to give Cornelius fresh information, for he approached the door of the coach, and, whilst the Officer, with his foot on the step, was giving some orders, he whispered:

"Condemned prisoners have been known to be taken to their own town, and that they should be made an example of, they have been executed there before the door of their own house. It depends on circumstances."

Cornelius thanked him by a sign. Then he said to himself:

"Ah, well, here is a fellow who never misses an occasion of administering consolation. In truth, friend, I am obliged to you. Good-bye."

The coach drove off.

"Ah, rascal! ah, brigand!" roared Gryphus, shaking his fist at his escaping victim. "And to think that

he is going away without giving me back my daughter."

"If they take me to Dordrecht," thought Cornelius, "I shall see my house in passing, and whether my poor flower-beds have all been spoiled."

CHAPTER XXX

IN WHICH WE GET AN INKLING OF THE FATE IN STORE FOR CORNELIUS VAN BAERLE

THE carriage rumbled along all day. It left Dordrecht on the left, passed through Rotterdam, and reached Delft. By five o'clock in the evening, it had gone at least twenty leagues.

Cornelius addressed a few questions to the Officer, who served at the same time as guard and companion, but circumspect as his inquiries were, he had the mortification of receiving no reply to them.

Cornelius regretted not having by his side the guard who had been so pleasant and who actually spoke to him without being spoken to first.

He would, no doubt, have been kind enough to give him full details concerning all that was strange in this third adventure, as precise as those which he had given him with regard to the two first.

They spent the night in the carriage. The next day, at daybreak, Cornelius found himself beyond Leyden, having the North Sea on his left and the Haarlemmer Meer on his right.

Three hours later he entered Haarlem.

Cornelius did not know what was happening in Haarlem, and we will leave him in his ignorance until he is enlightened by the course of events.

But it cannot be the same with the reader, who has the right to know everything, even before our hero.

We have seen that Rosa and the tulip, like two sisters

and two orphans, had been left, by Prince William of Orange, at President van Systens' house.

Rosa did not receive any news of the Stadtholder before the evening of the day on which she had met him.

Towards evening an Officer came to Van Systens' house ; he came from his Highness to invite Rosa to go to the Town Hall.

There, in the great Council Chamber into which, she was shown, she found the Prince waiting.

He was alone, and at his feet lay a large Friesland greyhound which looked at him fixedly, as if the faithful animal were trying to do what no man could do, read his master's thoughts.

William went on writing for a moment, then, lifting his eyes and seeing Rosa standing near the door :

"Come here, child," said he, without leaving off his writing.

Rosa took two or three steps towards the table.

"My Lord," said she, stopping.

"Quite right," said the Prince. "Sit down."

Rosa obeyed, for the Prince was looking at her. But scarcely had he brought his eyes back to his writing again before she bashfully drew back.

The Prince finished his letter.

During this time the greyhound had gone up to Rosa and had examined and fawned upon her.

"Ah, ah," said William to his dog. "You see she is a compatriot ; you recognise her, do you ?" Then turning towards Rosa, and fixing on her a scrutinising gloomy and impenetrable glance : "Now then, my child," said he.

The Prince was scarcely twenty-three years old, Rosa was eighteen or twenty ; he might more appropriately have said "my sister."

"My child," said he, with that strangely impressive accent of his, "let us speak freely."

Rosa began to tremble in every limb, though there was nothing but good nature in the Prince's expression.

"Sir !" she stammered.

"You have a father at Loewestein?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"You do not love him?"

"I do not love him, at least, my Lord, as a daughter should love."

"It is wrong not to love your father, my child; but it is right not to lie to your Prince."

Rosa lowered her eyes.

"And why do you not love your father?"

"My father is a bad man; an evil-natured man."

"In what way does he show his evil nature?"

"My father ill-treats his prisoners."

"All of them?"

"Yes, all."

"But do you not charge him with specially ill-treating one prisoner in particular?"

"My father particularly ill-treats Mynheer van Baerle, who——"

"Who is your lover?"

Rosa stepped back. "Whom I love, my Lord," she returned proudly.

"Since when?" asked the Prince.

"Since the day I first saw him."

"And when did you first see him?"

"The day after the Grand Pensionary John and his brother Cornelius were so horribly put to death."

The Prince's lips tightened, he knitted his brow, his eyelids were lowered so as to hide his eyes for a moment. Then he continued:

"But what good does it do you to love a man destined to live and die in prison?"

"It will be enough for me, my Lord, if he lives and dies in prison, to help him to live and die."

"And you would accept the position of being the wife of a prisoner?"

"I should be the proudest and happiest of human creatures to be Mynheer van Baerle's wife, but——"

"But what?"

"I dare not say, my Lord."

"There is a feeling of hope in your tone. What do you hope?"

She raised her beautiful limpid eyes and looked at William with a glance full of meaning, as if she would penetrate to the depths of his heart and rouse the clemency slumbering there.

"Ah, I understand."

Rosa smiled, clasping her hands together.

"Yes, my Lord."

"Hum!"

The Prince sealed the letter which he had just written and called one of his Officers.

"Mynheer van Deken," he said, "carry this message to Loewestein; you will submit the orders that I am giving to the Governor; you will execute the part that concerns yourself."

The Officer bowed, and soon under the vaulted gateway the gallop of a horse was heard resounding.

"My child," continued the Prince, "the festival of the tulip will be on Sunday, and the day after to-morrow is Sunday. Make yourself pretty with these five hundred guilders, for I wish the day to be a grand festival for you."

"How would your Highness desire me to be dressed?" murmured Rosa.

"In the costume of a Friesland bride," said William; "it will become you right well, my dear."

CHAPTER XXXI

AT HAARLEM

HAARLEM, which we entered three days since with Rosa, and which we are about to enter again in company with the prisoner, is a pretty town, which prides itself very justly on being one of the most shady spots in all Holland.

Whilst other towns pride themselves on their arsenals and dockyards, their shops and bazaars, Haarlem glories in excelling every other town in the Republic by her fine tufted elms, her slender poplars, and, above all, by her shady walks overhung with oaks, limes and chest-nuts.

Haarlem, while Leyden her neighbour, and Amsterdam her queen, were on their way to becoming, the one a city of learning and the other a city of commerce, wished to remain an agricultural—or rather a horticultural—city.

And indeed, airy, sheltered, well warmed by the sun, with her sea breezes and bright sunshine, she guaranteed to gardeners what no other town could offer.

Thus, all those choice spirits who possess a love of earth and all her gifts had established themselves at Haarlem, just as all restless and noisy people who possess a love of travel and of commerce had established themselves at Rotterdam and Amsterdam, while worldly and political people had established themselves at The Hague.

We have already mentioned that Leyden was the chosen resort of the learned.

Haarlem had a taste for gentle pleasures, music, painting, orchards, walks, woods and flower-beds. She was mad on flowers, and of all flowers, on tulips in particular.

Haarlem offered prizes in honour of tulips, and thus we come quite naturally to speak of the prize offered by the town on the 15th of May, 1673, in honour of the great black tulip without spot or blemish, which was to win a hundred thousand guilders for its grower.

Haarlem having announced her speciality ; Haarlem having pronounced her taste for flowers in general and for tulips in particular, at a time when all was war and sedition ; Haarlem having had the signal joy of seeing the ideal of her pretensions flourish and the ideal of tulips flower ; Haarlem, the pretty town, full of trees and sunshine, of light and shade—wished to celebrate the ceremony of the inauguration of the prize in a way which would live for ever in the memory of men.

And she had all the more right to do this because Holland is pre-eminently the land of merry-making and festivity. Phlegmatic as they are as a rule, the good Republicans of the Seven Provinces display a fierce energy and wild ardour in singing and dancing and carousing that is inferior to none on the occasion of their rejoicings. Look at the pictures of the two Teniers for example.

It is quite certain that lazy people are of all men the most ardent in fatiguing themselves, if not in work, then in play.

Haarlem, then, was trebly joyful, for she had to celebrate a threefold festival. First, the black tulip had been discovered ; then, Prince William of Orange would be present at the ceremony, true Hollander as he was ; and lastly, it was a point of honour with the States to show the French, at the conclusion of so disastrous a war as that of 1672, that the flooring of the Batavian Republic was solid enough to allow them to dance on it to the accompaniment of the cannon of their fleets.

The Horticultural Society of Haarlem had shown

itself worthy of its fame in giving a hundred thousand guilders for a tulip bulb. The town, not wishing to be behindhand, had given a like sum, which it had placed in the hands of its chief citizens to do honour to this national prize.

Thus, upon the Sunday fixed for the ceremony, there was such a stir in the crowd, such enthusiasm among the townsfolk, that even a mocking Frenchman, who laughs everywhere and at everything, could not have refrained from admiring the character of these good Dutchmen, equally ready to spend their money in fitting out ships against their enemies, that is to say, in sustaining the honour of the nation, or to reward the inventor of a new flower, destined to flourish for a day, and during that day to distract women, the learned and the curious.

At the head of the Notables and the Horticultural Committee shone Mynheer van Systens, arrayed in his richest clothes.

The worthy man had made every effort to resemble his favourite flower in the severe and sombre elegance of his garments, and to his honour let us hasten to add that he had succeeded perfectly.

Jet black and yellow velvet, and purple silk, such, with linen of dazzling whiteness, formed the ceremonial costume of the President, who marched at the head of his Committee with an enormous bouquet similar to that borne, a hundred and twenty-one years later, by Robespierre at the fête of "The Supreme Being."

Only the good President, instead of a heart swollen with the hatred and resentfulness of the French tribune, had in his bosom a flower no less innocent than the most innocent of those he carried in his hand.

Behind the Committee, gay as a flower-bed, perfumed like the spring, came the learned body of the town, the magistrates, the soldiers, the nobles, and syndics.

The people, even in Republican Holland, had no place in the procession; they made a hedge on either side.

It is, however, the best of all places for seeing—and

for hearing. It is the place of the multitude, who wait, the philosophers of States, until the triumphal procession has passed by, to know what to say about it, and sometimes what to do about it.

But this time, it was not a question of the triumph of Pompey, or of Cæsar. This time it was not the defeat of Mithridates, nor the conquest of the Gauls, that was being celebrated. The procession was gentle as the progress of a flock of sheep, as inoffensive as a flight of birds through the air.

Haarlem had no other triumphers than her gardeners. Worshipping flowers, she deified the florist.

In the midst of the peaceful and perfumed cortège could be seen the black tulip, borne upon a litter covered with white velvet fringed with gold. Four men carried the litter, and were relieved in succession by others, like the priests who bore the goddess Cybelé when she entered the Eternal City, brought thither from Etruria to the sound of trumpets and amid the adoration of all her worshippers.

This exhibition of the tulip was homage rendered by a whole people without taste or culture, to the taste and culture of its renowned and pious chiefs, whose blood they were ready to spill on the muddy pavement of the Buytenhof, equally ready later on to inscribe their names on the fairest stone of the Dutch Pantheon.

It was understood that the Stadtholder Prince would certainly bestow the prize of a hundred thousand guilders himself, which was interesting to the world in general, and that probably he would make a speech, which was interesting to his friends and his enemies in particular.

Indeed, in the most indifferent speeches of political men, their friends and their enemies always wish to see themselves reflected, and always think they can trace a ray of their own thoughts. As though the hat of a politician were not a bushel destined to intercept every gleam of light!

At length the great day, so long awaited, the 15th

of May, 1673, arrived, and all Haarlem, augmented by the inhabitants of the suburbs, was gathered beneath the fine forest trees with a fixed resolution of cheering, not the heroes of war, nor those of science, but the conquerors of nature, who had just forced her to produce what had seemed well-nigh an impossibility—the black tulip.

But nothing is more fickle than the resolution of the people to cheer only this or that thing. When a town is bent on cheering—and this is equally the case when she is bent on hissing—she never knows when to stop.

First, therefore, they cheered Van Systems and his bouquet, then the corporations themselves, and at length, this time with justice, they cheered the excellent band of music which the Town Council lavishly provided at each halt.

All eyes sought for the Queen of the festival, which was a black tulip, and its King, the author of that prodigy.

The latter, appearing at the end of the discourse which we have seen good Van Systems taking such pains to elaborate, produced a greater effect than even the Stadtholder himself.

But, for us, the interest of the day is not with our friend Van Systems' conscientious report, eloquent as it was, nor with the young aristocrats in their Sunday clothes, crunching their rich cakes, nor in the poor, half-naked little ragamuffins, nibbling at smoked eels, as if they were sticks of vanilla. Nor yet is our interest concerned with the pretty Dutch girls, with their rosy cheeks and white throats, nor with the fat, squat Mynheers who never left their houses; nor with the lean and yellow strangers from Ceylon or Java; nor with the excited populace, swallowing by way of refreshments cucumbers pickled in brine. No, for us, the interest of the situation, the overpowering dramatic interest, is not there, but with a glittering and radiant figure walking in the midst of the members of the Horticultural

Committee, beflowered to his girdle, smooth and sleek, dressed all in scarlet, which sets off his dark hair and sallow complexion.

This radiant hero, intoxicated with joy, this hero of the day, who was destined to have the signal honour of causing both Van Systens' speech and the presence of the Stadtholder to be forgotten, was Isaac Boxtel, who saw before him, at his right, upon a cushion of velvet, the black tulip, his pretended daughter ; on his left, in an enormous purse, sparkled and shone the hundred thousand guilders in good golden money, on which he kept an eye, so as never to lose sight of them for an instant.

From time to time Boxtel hastened his steps to rub shoulders with Van Systens. His way was to filch from every man a little of his worth, to make himself of some value, as he had robbed Rosa of her tulip to make his own glory and fortune.

Another quarter of an hour and the Prince will arrive, the procession will halt for the last time, and, the tulip, being placed upon its throne, the Prince, who on this occasion makes way for his rival in the public adoration, will take a magnificently illuminated parchment, on which is inscribed the name of the grower, and will proclaim in a loud and audible voice that a marvel has been discovered, and Holland, through the intermediary of him, Boxtel, has forced Nature to produce a black flower, and that this flower will henceforth be called *Tulupa Nigra Bortextea*.

From time to time, however, Boxtel would take his eyes from the tulip and the purse for a moment to look timidly over the crowd, for he feared above everything to see the beautiful Frieslander's pale face. This was a spectre which troubled his happiness as grievously as did Banquo's ghost the peace of Macbeth's feast.

Yet this wretch, who had climbed another man's wall, who had entered his neighbour's house through the window, who had broken into Rosa's room with a false key ; this robber who had stolen the pride of a man and

the dowry of a woman—did not look upon himself as a thief.

He had so closely watched this tulip, he had pursued it so ardently from the drawer in Cornelius' drying-room to the scaffold of the Buytenhof, from the scaffold of the Buytenhof to the prison in the Fortress of Loewestein, he had watched it bud and grow so well in Rosa's window, he had so often warmed the air round it by his breath—that no one seemed more its grower than himself ; whoever should lay claim to it now, would be trying to steal it from him.

But he could not see Rosa ; so his joy was not troubled.

The procession stopped at a circle of magnificent trees, decorated by garlands and inscriptions—stopped to the sound of an outburst of music ; and the girls of Haarlem appeared to escort the tulip to the raised stand which it was to occupy upon the platform, beside the chair of his Highness, the Stadtholder.

And the proud tulip, mounted on its pedestal, looked down upon the multitude, who clapped their hands, and roused the echoes of Haarlem with their cheers.

CHAPTER XXXII

A LAST BOON

AT this solemn moment and whilst the shouts of applause were still audible, a coach passed along the road which borders the wood and went slowly on its way, so as not to injure the swarms of children that were crowded out into the roadway by the pressure of the men and women massed under the trees.

The coach in question, dusty, travel-stained, creaking on its ponderous axles, held the unfortunate Van Baerle, to whom, through the open window, the spectacle which we have tried—very imperfectly—to put before the eyes of our readers, began to unfold itself.

The crowd, the noise, the glitter of so much human and natural splendour, dazzled the prisoner like a flash of lightning entering his cell.

In spite of the lack of interest which his companion had displayed in replying to his questions regarding his own fate, he ventured to question him for the last time on all this stir, which at first he did not think could be in any way connected with himself.

“What does it all mean, pray, Mynheer Lieutenant?” he asked of the Officer charged with escorting him.

“As you can see, Sir,” replied he, “it is a festival.”

“Ah, a festival,” said Cornelius, in the mournfully indifferent tones of a man to whom no worldly joy has come for some time past.

Then, after a moment’s silence, and when the carriage had proceeded a little further, he asked:

“The feast of the patron saint of Haarlem? For I see so many flowers.”

"It is indeed a festival in which flowers play the chief part, Sir."

"Oh, what sweet perfumes, what beautiful colours!" cried Cornelius.

"Stop a moment that the gentleman may see," said the Officer to the soldier who was acting as postilion, actuated by one of those impulses of kindly pity so often to be found among military men.

"Oh, thank you, Sir, for your kindness," answered Van Baerle, sadly, "but the joy of others is but a sorrowful pleasure to me; spare me, therefore, I pray you."

"As you will; let us go on, then. I ordered a halt because you asked for it and in consequence of your love for flowers, and especially for the flower whose festival is being celebrated to-day."

"And what is the flower whose festival is being celebrated to-day, Sir?"

"The tulip."

"The tulip!" cried Van Baerle. "It is the feast of tulips to-day?"

"Yes, Sir; but as this sight is so disagreeable to you, let us get on."

And the Officer made as though he would give the order to move on.

But Cornelius stopped him, a sorrowful doubt beginning to enter his mind.

"Mynheer," he asked in a trembling voice, "will the prize be awarded to-day?"

"The prize for the black tulip? Yes."

Cornelius's cheek grew purple, a shudder passed over his whole body, beads of perspiration stood on his brow.

Then he reflected that, both he and his tulip being absent, the festival would be a fiasco for want of a man or flower to crown.

"Alas!" said he, "all these good people will be as unhappy as I am, for they will not see this solemn function to which they are invited, or at any rate they will only see it incompletely."

"What do you mean, Sir?"

"I mean," said Cornelius, throwing himself back into the depths of the carriage, "that the black tulip will never be found except by some one whom I know."

"Then, Sir," said the Officer, "this some one you know has really found it, for what all Haarlem is at this moment gazing at is the very flower you supposed impossible to find."

"The black tulip!" cried Van Baerle, throwing his body half out of the coach-door. "Where is it? Where is it?"

"Yonder, on that platform, do you see it?"

"Yes, I see it!"

"Come, Sir," said the Officer, "we must be moving on."

"Oh, for pity's sake, for mercy's sake, Mynheer," said Van Baerle, "oh, do not take me away. Let me look at it again. What is it I see yonder? The black tulip? Quite black? Is it possible? Oh, Sir, have you seen it? It must have some blemishes, it must be imperfect. Perhaps it is only dyed black; oh, were it only there, I could easily tell. Let me get down, Sir, let me see it close, I beg of you."

"Are you mad, Sir? How can I?"

"I implore you."

"But you forget that you are a prisoner."

"It is true I am a prisoner, but I am a man of honour; and on my honour, Sir, I will not escape, I will not attempt to fly; only let me look at the flower!"

"But my orders, Sir!"

And the Officer signed again to order the soldier to proceed.

Cornelius stopped him once more. "Oh, be patient, be generous; my whole life depends on a movement of pity on your part. Alas! my life, Sir, will probably not be long now! Ah! Sir, you do not know what I suffer, you do not know all that is fighting within my head and heart, for," continued Cornelius, "if after all this tulip should be mine, if it were the one stolen from Rosa! Oh, Sir, can you understand what it is to have found the black tulip, to have seen it for one mo-

ment, to have recognised that it was perfect, that it was at once a masterpiece of art and of nature, and then to have lost it, to have lost it for ever? Oh, I must get out, Sir, I must go and see it; you may kill me afterwards if you like, but I *will* see it, I *must* see it."

"Hush, Sir, hush! and quick, back into the coach; here comes the escort of His Excellency the Stadtholder, and if the Prince should notice a scandal or hear a noise, there would soon be an end of you and of me."

Van Baerle, more afraid for his companion than for himself, flung himself back into the carriage, but he could only remain there for an instant, and the first twenty horsemen had scarcely passed ere he returned to the door, gesticulating imploringly towards the Stadtholder at the very moment that he passed.

William, calm and quiet as usual, was betaking himself to the market-place to fulfil his duties as President. He had in his hand a roll of parchment, which was to be his bâton on this festive occasion.

Seeing the man who was gesticulating supplicatingly to him, no doubt also recognising the Officer accompanying him, the Stadtholder gave the order to halt.

His horses, champing on their steel bits, stopped at once, six paces from the carriage in which Van Baerle was caged.

"Who is it?" asked the Prince of the Officer, who, at the first command of the Stadtholder, had jumped down from the carriage and respectfully approached him.

"My Lord," said he, "it is the State prisoner whom, by your orders, I have brought from Loewestein, and whom I was taking to you at Haarlem, according to your Excellency's wishes."

"What does he want?"

"He is entreating to be allowed to stop here for a moment."

"To see the black tulip, my Lord," cried Van Baerle, clasping his hands. "And after I have seen it, I will die, if need be; but dying I shall bless your merciful

Excellency your Excellency who allows my work to have its end and its glorification."

It was, indeed, a curious spectacle—these two men each at the door of his coach, surrounded by his guards the one all powerful, the other so abject ; the one about to mount his throne, the other believing himself about to mount the scaffold.

William looked coldly at Cornelius, and heard his vehement prayer.

Then addressing himself to the Officer, he said :

"This is the mutinous prisoner who wanted to kill his gaoler at Loewestein ?"

Cornelius gave a sigh and bowed his head. His tender and honest countenance turned red and pale by turns. These words of the omnipotent, omniscient Prince, who, through some secret messenger invisible to men, already knew of his crime, presaged for him not only certain punishment, but also a refusal.

He did not attempt to struggle ; he made no effort to defend himself. He presented to the Prince a touching spectacle of unaffected despair very intelligible and very affecting to so great a heart and so great a mind as that which contemplated him.

"Let the prisoner get down," said the Stadtholder "and let him go and see the black tulip, which is, indeed, worthy of being looked at—once at any rate."

"Oh," said Cornelius, nearly swooning with joy, he staggered on to the steps of the carriage, "Oh, my Lord !"

He was choking, and without the supporting arm of the Officer, poor Cornelius would have thanked his Excellency on his knees with his face in the dust.

The permission having been given, the Prince continued on his way under the trees, amidst the more rapturous acclamations, and soon reached his temporary throne amid the thunder of cannon.

CONCLUSION

VAN BAERLE, conducted by four guards, who forced a way for themselves through the crowd, penetrated obliquely towards the black tulip, which he devoured with his eyes as he approached it.

At last he saw the unique flower which, by mysterious combinations of heat and cold, of shade and light, was to appear for a day, and then disappear for ever. He saw it from a distance of six paces; he enjoyed its perfection and gracefulness; he saw it behind the young girls, who formed a guard of honour for this queen of excellence and beauty. And yet, the more he assured himself with his own eyes of the perfection of the flower, the more was his heart torn asunder. He looked all around him to ask a question, one only. But everywhere he saw unknown faces; everywhere attention was directed to the throne on which the Stadtholder had just taken his seat.

William, who attracted general attention, rose and cast a quiet glance over the excited crowd, and his piercing eye rested by turns on the three extremities of a triangle, occupied by three very different interests, and three very different dramas.

At one of these angles was Boxtel, trembling with impatience, and devouring the Prince, the guilders, the black tulip, and the assembly with all his eyes.

At the other was Cornelius, panting, dumb—with looks, life, heart, love, for nothing save his daughter, the black tulip.

Lastly, at the third extremity, on a stand along with the maidens of Haarlem, stood a beautiful Friesland

girl, dressed in fine red woollen cloth, embroidered with silver, and covered with lace falling in folds from her head-dress on gold brocade.

It was Rosa, who leant, fainting, with swimming eyes, on the arm of one of William's Officers.

Then the Prince, seeing his audience was ready, slowly unrolled the parchment, and, in a calm and clear though weak, voice, not one note of which, however was lost, thanks to the religious silence which fell suddenly upon the fifty thousand spectators and sealed their lips, spoke thus :

"You know, my friends, for what purpose you are gathered here. A prize of a hundred thousand guilders has been promised to whoever should discover the black tulip. The black tulip ! And this marvel of Holland is there, exposed to view : the black tulip has been produced, and that according to all the conditions exacted by the programme of the Horticultural Society of Haarlem. The history of its birth, and the name of its grower, will be written in the book of honour of the city. Let the person who is the owner of the black tulip approach."

As he pronounced these words, the Prince cast a searching look at the three extremities of the triangle to judge of the effect they produced.

He saw Boxtel rush forward from his place.

He saw Cornelius make an involuntary movement.

And lastly, he saw the Officer deputed to watch over Rosa conduct her, or rather push her, towards her throne.

A double cry arose at the same moment from the Prince's right and left hand.

Boxtel, thunderstruck, and Cornelius bewildered, had both cried out :

"Rosa ! Rosa !"

"This tulip is yours, is it not, my child ?" said the Prince.

"Yes, my Lord," stammered Rosa, whose striking beauty was greeted with a general murmur of applause.

"Oh," muttered Cornelius, "then she lied when she said that the flower had been stolen from her. Oh, that is why she left Loewestein! Alas, I am forgotten, betrayed by her, by her whom I thought my best friend!"

"Oh," groaned Boxtel on his part, "I am lost!"

"This tulip," continued the Prince, "will therefore bear the name of its producer, and will be inscribed in the Catalogue of Flowers, under the name of *Tulipa Nigra Rosa Barlæensis*, because the name Van Baerle will henceforth be the married name of this damsel."

At the same time William took Rosa's hand and placed it within that of a man who, pale, dumb and beside himself with joy, had rushed forward to the foot of the throne, greeted in turn his Prince, his betrothed, and his God, who, from the depths of the blue sky, looked down upon the spectacle of two happy hearts.

At the same time another man, seized with a very different kind of emotion, fell at President van Systens' feet.

Boxtel, crushed by the failure of his hopes, had fainted. They raised him up, felt his pulse, and his heart; he was dead.

This incident did not much disturb the festival, as neither the President nor the Prince troubled themselves about it.

Cornelius drew back in dismay; in the thief, the faithless Jacob, he had just recognised the true Isaac Boxtel, his neighbour, whom, in the innocence of his heart, he had not for a single moment suspected of so vile a deed.

After all, it was a good thing for Boxtel that Providence had sent an apoplectic seizure at such an appropriate moment, as it prevented him from witnessing any longer scenes so painful to his pride and avarice.

Then to the sound of trumpets the procession resumed its way without any part of its ceremony being altered, except that Boxtel was dead, and Cornelius and Rosa walked triumphantly hand in hand, side by side.

When they reached the Town Hall, the Prince pointing to the purse containing the hundred thousand guilders, said to Cornelius :

"It is difficult to tell who has won the money—you or Rosa ; if you discovered the black tulip, she raised it and made it bloom, and not to offer it to her as a dowry would be unjust. In any case, it is the gift of the town of Haarlem to the tulip."

Cornelius waited to see what the Prince would add further, and the latter continued :

"I give Rosa a hundred thousand guilders which she will have richly earned, and which she can offer to you ; they are the prize of her love, her courage, and her honesty.

"As for you, Sir, again thanks to Rosa, who has brought the proof of your innocence"—and as he spoke these words the Prince handed to Cornelius the famous flyleaf of the Bible, on which was written the letter from Cornelius de Witt, and which had been used to wrap round the third bulb—"as for you, it has been found that you have been imprisoned for a crime which you never committed. Not only are you free, but inasmuch as the property of an innocent man cannot be confiscated, therefore your property also is returned to you.

"Mynheer van Baerle, you are the godson of Cornelius de Witt, and the friend of John de Witt. Show yourself ever worthy of the name given to you by the one at the baptismal font, and of the love which the other bore you. Keep up the traditions of the merits of both of them, for those heroes, wrongfully condemned and punished in a moment of popular error, were two great citizens of whom Holland is proud to-day."

After these words which, contrary to his custom, the Prince had announced in a voice full of emotion, he gave both his hands to the two lovers, kneeling at their side, to kiss.

Then, heaving a sigh : "Alas !" said he, "happy you who, dreaming, it may be, of the true glory of Holland

and above all of her true happiness, seek not to conquer anything for her save new colours in tulips."

And throwing a glance in the direction of France, as though he saw fresh clouds gathering there, he mounted his coach and drove away.

* * * * *

Cornelius departed the same day for Dordrecht with Rosa, who meantime had sent her old nurse Zug as ambassador to inform her father of all that had happened. Those who, thanks to our explanations, know the character of old Gryphus, will understand that he did not easily become reconciled to his son-in-law. He still carried the memory of the blows he had received at his hands. He had counted them by the bruises they had left, and they amounted, he declared, to forty-one; but he ended by making up the quarrel, in order, so he said, not to be less generous than his Highness the Stadtholder.

Made guardian of tulips, after having been a gaoler of men, he was the most rigorous keeper of flowers ever met with in Flanders, and it was a sight to see him looking out for harmful butterflies, killing field-mice, and chasing thirsty bees.

As he had heard Boxtel's story, and was furious at having been the dupe of Jacob, he destroyed the observatory erected by the latter behind the sycamore; for Boxtel's plot of ground, having been sold by auction, now enclosed Cornelius's flower-beds, which were surrounded in such a way as to defy all the telescopes of Dordrecht.

Rosa, more and more beautiful every day, grew in wisdom also, and at the end of two years of married life, she could read and write so well that she was able to take sole charge of the education of two fine children, who had been born in the month of May, 1674, and 1675, and who gave her far less trouble than the famous flower to which she owed them.

No need to add that, the one being a boy and

the other a girl, the first was called Cornelius and the second Rosa.

Van Baerle remained faithful to Rosa and to his tulip. All his life was given to making his wife happy and cultivating his flowers, and he discovered a whole series of new varieties, which are inscribed in the Dutch catalogue.

The two chief ornaments of his drawing-room were the two flyleaves of Cornelius de Witt's Bible framed in great gold frames. On one of these, it will be remembered, his godfather had written to him bidding him burn his correspondence with the Marquis de Louvois, and on the other he had bequeathed to Rosa the bulb of the black tulip, on condition that, with her dowry of a hundred thousand guilders, she should marry a handsome young man of twenty-six to twenty-eight, who loved her, and whom she too loved—a condition which had been scrupulously fulfilled, although Cornelius was not dead, or rather because he was not dead.

And, finally, to keep off evil-wishers in the future, jealous folk whom Providence might not find leisure to remove from his path as in the case of Isaac Boxtel, he wrote above his door the verse that Grotius had cut on the day of his flight, upon the wall of his prison.

"Some there are who have suffered so sorely they have earned the right never to say, 'I am too happy.'"

Page 11

243

